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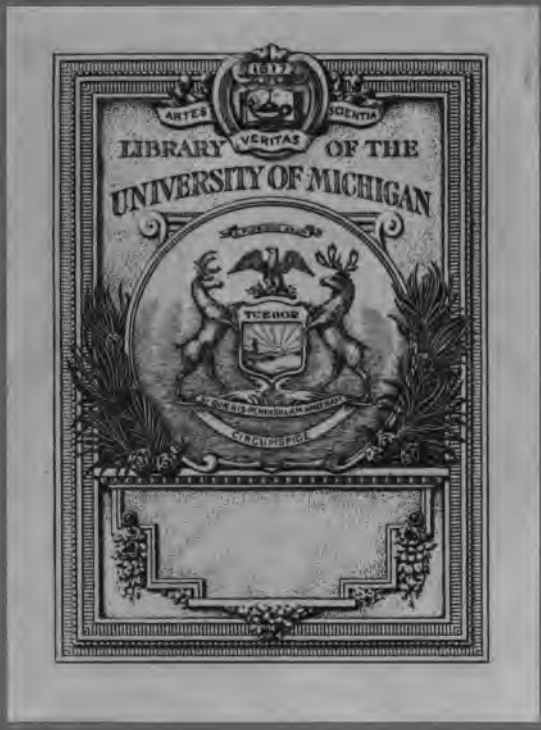
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ELDER CONKLIN AND OTHER STORIES

BY

FRANK HARRIS

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LONDON
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ELDER CONKLIN.

B

ELDER CONKLIN.

AS soon as the Elder left the supper-table his daughter and the new schoolmaster went out on the stoop or verandah which ran round the frame-house. The day had been warm, but the chilliness of the evening air betokened the near approach of the Indian summer. The house stood upon the crest of what had been a roll in the prairie, and as the two leant together on the railing of the stoop, they looked out over a small orchard of peach-trees to where, a couple of hundred yards away, at the foot of the bluff, Cottonwood Creek ran, fringed on either bank by the trees which had suggested its name. On the horizon to their right, away beyond the spears of yellow maize, the sun was sinking, a ball of orange fire against the rose mist of the sky. When the girl turned towards him, perhaps to avoid the level rays, Bancroft expressed the hope that she would go with him to the house-warming. A little stiffly Miss Conklin replied that she'd be pleased, but——

"What have I done, Miss Loo, to offend you?" the young man spoke deprecatingly.

"Nothin', I guess," she answered, with assumed indifference.

"When I first came you were so kind and helped

me in everything. Now for the last two or three days you seem cold and sarcastic, as if you were angry with me. I'd be sorry if that were so—very sorry."

"Why did you ask Jessie Stevens to go with you to the house-warmin'?" was the girl's retort.

"I certainly didn't ask her," he replied hotly. "You must know I didn't."

"Then Seth lied!" exclaimed Miss Conklin. "But I guess he'll not try that again with me—Seth Stevens I mean. He wanted me to go with him to-night, and I didn't give him the mitten, as I should if I'd thought you were goin' to ask me."

"What does 'giving the mitten' mean?" he questioned, with a puzzled air.

"Why, jest the plainest kind of refusal, I guess; but I only told him I was afraid I'd have to go with you, seein' you were a stranger. 'Afraid,'" she repeated, as if the word stung her. "But he'll lose nothin' by waitin', nothin'. You hear me talk." And her eyes flashed.

As she drew herself up in indignation, Bancroft thought he had never seen anyone so lovely. "A perfect Hebe," he said to himself, and started as if he had said the words aloud. The comparison was apt. Though Miss Loo Conklin was only seventeen, her figure had all the ripeness of womanhood, and her height—a couple of inches above the average—helped to make her look older than she was. Her face was more than pretty; it was, in fact, as beautiful as youth, good features, and healthy colouring could make it. A knotted mass of chestnut hair set off the shapely head: the large blue eyes were

deepened by dark lashes. The underlip, however, was a little full, and the oval of the face through short curve of jaw a trifle too round. Her companion tried in vain to control the admiration of his gaze. Unelated by what she felt to be merely her due, Miss Conklin was silent for a time. At length she observed:

"I guess I'll have to go and fix up."

Just then the Elder appeared on the stoop. "Ef you're goin'," he said in the air, as his daughter swept past him into the house, "you'd better hitch Jack up to the light buggy."

"Thank you," said the schoolmaster; and for the sake of saying something, he added, "What a fine view." The Elder paused but did not answer; he saw nothing remarkable in the landscape except the Indian corn and the fruit, and the words "fine view" conveyed no definite meaning to him; he went on towards the stables.

The taciturnity of the Elder annoyed Bancroft excessively. He had now passed a couple of weeks as a boarder with the Conklins, and the Elder's unconscious rudeness was only one of many peculiarities that had brought him to regard these Western folk as belonging almost to a distinct species. George Bancroft was an ordinary middle-class Bostonian. He had gone through the University course with rather more than average success, and had the cant of unbounded intellectual sympathies. His self-esteem, however, was not based chiefly on his intelligence, but on the ease with which he reached a conventional standard of conduct. Not a little of his character showed itself in his appearance. In

figure he was about the middle height, and strongly though sparely built. The head was well-proportioned; the face a lean oval; the complexion sallow; the hair and small moustache very dark; the brown eyes inexpressive and close-set, revealing a tendency to suspiciousness—Bancroft prided himself on his prudence. A certain smartness of dress and a conscious carriage discovered a vanity which, in an older man, would have been fatuous. A large or a sensitive nature would in youth, at least, have sought unconsciously to bring itself into sympathy with strange surroundings, but Bancroft looked upon those who differed from him in manners or conduct as inferior, and this presumption in regard to the Conklins was strengthened by his superiority in book-learning, the importance of which he had been trained to over-estimate.

During their drive Miss Conklin made her companion talk of Eastern life; she wanted to know what Chicago was like, and what people did in New York. Stirred by her eager curiosity, Bancroft sketched both cities in hasty outline, and proceeded to tell what he had read and heard of Paris, and Rome, and London. But evidently the girl was not interested by his praise of the art-life of European capitals or their historical associations; she cut short his disquisition:

"See here! When I first seed you an' knew you was raised in Boston, an' had lived in New York, I jest thought you no account for comin' to this jumpin'-off place. Why did you come to Kansas, anyway, and what did you reckon upon doin'? I guess you ain't goin' to teach school always."

The young man flushed under the frankness of the girl's gaze and question, and what appeared like contempt in her opinion of him. Again he became painfully conscious that there was a wide social difference between Miss Conklin and himself. He had been accustomed to more reticence, and such direct questioning seemed impertinent. But he was so completely under the spell of her beauty, that he answered with scarcely visible hesitation:

"I came out here because I wanted to study law, and wasn't rich enough to do it in the East. This school was the first position offered to me. I had to take it, but I intend, after a term or two, to find a place in a lawyer's office in some town, and get admitted to practice. If I'd had fifteen hundred dollars I could have done that in Boston or New York, but I suppose it will all come right in time."

"If I'd been you I'd have stayed in New York," and then, clasping her hands on her knee, and looking intently before her, she added, "When I get to New York—an' that won't be long—I'll stay there, you bet! I guess New York's good enough for me. There's style there," and she nodded her head decisively as she spoke.

Miss Loo and Bancroft were among the latest arrivals at the Morrises'. She stood beside him while he hitched Jack to a post of the fence amidst a crowd of other horses, and they entered the house together. In due form she presented the schoolmaster to Mr. and Mrs. Morris, and smilingly produced three linen tablecloths as her contribution to the warming. After accepting the present with profuse thanks and unmeasured praise of it and of the giver, Mrs. Morris

conducted the newcomers across the passage into the best sitting-room, which the young folk had already appropriated, leaving the second-best room to their elders.

In the small square apartment were some twenty boys and girls, ranging between sixteen and twenty-two years of age. The boys stood about at one end of the room, while the girls sat at the other end chattering and enjoying themselves. Bancroft did not go among those of his own sex, none of whom he knew, and whom he set down as mere uncouth lads. He found it more amusing to stand near the girls and talk with them. By so doing he unconsciously offended the young men.

Presently a tall youth came towards them :

" I guess we'd better play somethin' ? "

" Forfeits ! Mr. Stevens," was a girl's quick reply, and it was arranged to play forfeits in a queer educational fashion. First of all Mr. Stevens left the room, presumably to think. When he came in again he went over to Miss Conklin and asked her to spell " forgive." After a moment's pause she spelt it correctly. He retired slowly, and on his return stopped again in front of Miss Conklin with the word " reconciliation." She withstood the test triumphantly. Annoyed apparently with the pains she took, Mr. Stevens, on his next entrance, turned to a pretty, quiet girl named Miss Black, and gave her "stranger," with a glance at Bancroft, which spread a laugh among the boys. Miss Black began with "strai," and was not allowed to go on, for Mr. Stevens at once offered his arm, and led her into the passage.

" What takes place outside ? " asked Bancroft con-

fidentially of the girl sitting nearest to him, who happened to be Miss Jessie Stevens. She replied with surprise:

"I guess they kiss each other!"

"Ah!—Now I understand," he said to himself, and from that moment followed the proceedings with more interest. He soon found that successive pairs called each other out in turn, and he had begun to tire of the game, when Miss Jessie Stevens stopped before him and pertly gave the word "friendship." Of course he spelt it wrongly, and accompanied her outside the door. As he kissed her cheek, she drew away her head quickly:

"I only called you out to give you a chance of kissin' Loo Conklin."

He thought it wiser not to reply to this, and contented himself with thanking her as they entered the room. He paused before Miss Conklin, and gave her "bumpkin," adding, by way of explanation, "a rude country fellow." She spelt it cheerfully, without the "p." When the mistake was made plain to her, which took some little time, she accepted his arm, and went with him into the passage. He kissed her more than once, murmuring, "At last, Miss Loo!" She replied seriously:

"See here! You're goin' to get into a fuss with Seth Stevens if you call me out often. And he's the strongest of them all. You ain't afraid? O.K. then. I guess we'll pay him out for lyin'."

On returning to the room, Bancroft became conscious of a thinly veiled antagonism on the part of the young men. But he had hardly time to notice it, when Miss Loo came in and said to him demurely,

"Loo." He spelt "You." Much laughter from the girls greeted the simple pleasantry.

So the game, punctuated by kisses, went on, until Miss Loo came in for the fourth time, and stopped again before Bancroft, whereupon Seth Stevens pushed through the crowd of young men, and said:

"Miss Loo Conklin! You know the rule is to change after three times."

At once she moved in front of the stout youth, Richards, who had come forward to support his friend, and said "liar!" flashing at the same time an angry glance at Stevens. "Lire," spelt Richards painfully, and the pair withdrew.

Bancroft went over to the men's corner; the critical moment had come; he measured his rival with a glance. Stevens was tall, fully six feet in height, and though rather lank, had the bow legs and round shoulders which often go with strength.

As he took up his new position, Stevens remarked to a companion, in a contemptuous drawl:

"Schoolmasters kin talk an' teach, but kin they fight?"

Bancroft took it upon himself to answer, "Sometimes."

"Kin you?" asked Stevens sharply, turning to him.

"Well enough."

"We kin try that to-morrow. I'll be in the lot behind Richards' mill at four o'clock."

"I'll be there," replied the schoolmaster, making his way again towards the group of girls.

Nothing further happened until the old folk came in, and the party broke up. Driving homewards with Miss Conklin, Bancroft began:

"How can I thank you enough for being so kind to me? You called me out often, almost as often as I called you."

"I did that to rile Seth Stevens."

"And not at all to please me?"

"Perhaps a little," she said, and silence fell upon them.

His caution led him to restrain himself. He was disturbed by vague doubts, and felt the importance of a decisive word. Presently Miss Conklin spoke, in a lower voice than usual, but with an accent of coquettish triumph in the question:

"So you like me after all? Like me really?"

"Do you doubt it?" His accent was reproachful. "But why do you say 'after all'?"

"You never kissed me comin' back from church last Sunday, and I showed you the school and everythin'!"

"Might I have kissed you then? I was afraid of offending you."

"Offendin' me? Well, I guess not! Every girl expects to be kissed when she goes out with a man."

"Let's make up for it now, Loo. May I call you Loo?" While speaking he slipped his arm round her waist, and kissed her again and again.

"That's my name. But there! I guess you've made up enough already." And Miss Conklin disengaged herself. On reaching the house, however, she offered her lips before getting out of the buggy.

When alone in his bedroom, Bancroft sat and thought. The events of the evening had been annoying. Miss Loo's conduct had displeased him; he

did not like familiarity. He would not acknowledge to himself that he was jealous. The persistent way Stevens had tried to puzzle her had disgusted him —that was all. It was sufficiently plain that in the past she had encouraged Stevens. Her freedom and boldness grated upon his nerves. He condemned her with a sense of outraged delicacy. Girls ought not to make advances; she had no business to ask him whether he liked her; she should have waited for him to speak plainly. He only required what was right. Yet the consciousness that she loved him flattered his vanity and made him more tolerant; he resolved to follow her lead or to improve upon it. Why shouldn't he? She had said "every girl expects to be kissed." And if she wanted to be kissed, it was the least he could do to humour her.

All the while, at the bottom of his heart there was bitterness. He would have given much to believe that an exquisite soul animated that lovely face. Perhaps she was better than she seemed. He tried to smother his distrust of her, till it was rendered more acute by another reflection—she had got him into the quarrel with Seth Stevens. He did not trouble much about it. He was confident enough of his strength and the advantages of his boyish training in the gymnasium to regard the trial with equanimity. Still, the girls he had known in the East would never have set two men to fight, never—it was not womanly. Good girls were by nature peacemakers. There must be something in Loo, he argued, almost—vulgar, and he shrank from the word. To lessen the sting of his disappointment, he pictured her to himself and strove to forget her faults.

On the following morning he went to his school very early. The girls were not as obtrusive as they had been. Miss Jessie Stevens did not bother him by coming up every five minutes to see what he thought of her dictation, as she had been wont to do. He was rather glad of this; it saved him importunate glances and words, and the propinquity of girlish forms, which had been more trying still. But what was the cause of the change? It was evident that the girls regarded him as belonging to Miss Conklin. He disliked the assumption; his caution took alarm; he would be more careful in future. The forenoon melted into afternoon quietly, though there were traces on Jake Conklin's bench of unusual agitation and excitement. To these signs the schoolmaster paid small heed at the moment. He was absorbed in thinking of the evening before, and in trying to appraise each of Loo's words and looks. At last the time came for breaking up. When he went outside to get into the buggy—he had brought Jack with him—he noticed, without paying much attention to it, that Jake Conklin was not there to unhitch the strap and in various other ways to give proof of a desire to ride with him. He set off for Richards' mill, whither, needless to say, Jake and half-a-dozen other urchins had preceded him as fast as their legs could carry them.

As soon as he was by himself the schoolmaster recognized that the affair was known to his scholars, and the knowledge nettled him. His anger fastened upon Loo. It was all her fault; her determination to "pay Stevens out" had occasioned the quarrel. Well, he would fight and win, and then have done

with the girl whose lips had doubtless been given to Stevens as often and as readily as to himself. The thought put him in a rage, while the idea of meeting Stevens on an equality humiliated him—strife with such a boor was in itself a degradation. And Loo had brought it about. He could never forgive her. The whole affair was disgraceful, and her words, "Every girl expects to be kissed when she goes out with a man," were vulgar and coarse! With which conclusion in his mind he turned to the right round the section-line, and saw the mill before him.

AFTER the return from the house-warming, and the understanding, as she considered it, with Bancroft, Miss Loo gave herself up to her new-born happiness. As she lay in bed her first thought was of her lover: he was "splendid," whereby she meant pleasant and attractive. She wondered remorsefully how she had taken him to be quite "homely-looking" when she first saw him. Why, he was altogether above any one she knew—not perhaps jest in looks, but in knowledge and in manners—he didn't stand in the corner of the room like the rest and stare till all the girls became uncomfortable. What did looks matter after all? Besides, he wasn't homely, he was handsome; so he was. His eyes were lovely—she had always liked dark eyes best—and his moustache was dark, too, and she liked that. To be sure it wasn't very long yet, or thick, but it would grow; and here she sighed with content. Most girls in her place would be sorry he wasn't taller, but she didn't care for very tall men; they sorter looked down on you.

Anyway, he was strong—a pang of fear shot suddenly through her—he might be hurt by that brute Seth Stevens on the morrow. Oh, no. That was impossible. He was brave, she felt sure, very brave. Still she wished they weren't going to fight; it made her uneasy to think that she had provoked the conflict. But it couldn't be helped now; she couldn't interfere. Besides, men were always fightin' about somethin' or other.

Mr. Crew, the Minister, had said right off that he'd make his mark in the world; all the girls thought so too, and that was real good. She'd have hated a stupid, ordinary man. Fancy being married to Seth Stevens, and she shuddered; yet he was a sight better than any of the others; he had even seemed handsome to her once. Ugh! Then Bancroft's face came before her again, and remembering his kisses she flushed and grew hot from head to foot. They would be married soon—right off. As George hadn't the money, her father must give what he could and they'd go East. Her father wouldn't refuse, though he'd feel bad p'r'aps; he never refused her anythin'. If fifteen hundred dollars would be enough for George alone, three thousand would do for both of them. Once admitted as a lawyer, he would get a large practice: he was so clever and hard-working. She was real glad that she'd be the means of giving him the opportunity he wanted to win riches and position. But he must begin in New York. She would help him on, and she'd see New York and all the shops and elegant folk, and have silk dresses. They'd live in a hotel and get richer and richer, and she'd drive about with—here she grew hot again.

The vision, however, was too entrancing to be shut out; she saw herself distinctly driving in an open carriage, with a negro nurse holding the baby all in laces in front, "jest too cute for anythin'," and George beside her, and everyone in Fifth Avenue starin'.

Sleep soon brought confusion into her picture of a happy future; but when she awoke, the glad confidence of the previous night had given place to self-reproach and fear. During the breakfast she scarcely spoke or lifted her eyes. Her silent preoccupation was misunderstood by Bancroft; he took it to mean that she didn't care what happened to him; she was selfish, he decided. All the morning she went about the house in a state of nervous restlessness, and at dinner-time her father noticed her unusual pallor and low spirits. To the Elder, the meal-times were generally a source of intense pleasure. He was never tired of feasting his eyes upon his daughter when he could do so without attracting attention, and he listened to her fluent obvious opinions on men and things with a fulness of pride and joy which was difficult to divine since his keenest feelings never stirred the impassibility of his features. He had small power of expressing his thoughts, and even in youth he had felt it impossible to render in words any deep emotion. For more than forty years the fires of his nature had been "banked up." Reticent and self-contained, he appeared to be hard and cold; yet his personality was singularly impressive. About five feet ten in height, he was lean and sinewy, with square shoulders and muscles of whipcord. His face recalled the Indian type;

the same prominent slightly beaked nose, high cheek bones and large knot of jaw. But there the resemblance ended. The eyes were steel-blue; the upper lip long; the mouth firm; short, bristly, silver hair stood up all over his head, in defiant contrast to the tanned, unwrinkled skin. He was clean-shaven, and looked less than his age, which was fifty-eight.

All through the dinner he wondered anxiously what could so affect his daughter, and how he could find out without intruding himself upon her confidence. His great love for his child had developed in the Elder subtle delicacies of feeling which are as the fragrance of love's humility. In the afternoon Loo, dressed for walking, met him, and, of her own accord, began the conversation:

"Father, I want to talk to you."

The Elder put down the water-bucket he had been carrying, and drew the shirt-sleeves over his nervous brown arms, whether out of unconscious modesty or simple sense of fitness it would be impossible to say. She went on hesitatingly, "I want to know—Do you think Mr. Bancroft's strong, stronger than—Seth Stevens?"

The Elder gave his whole thought to the problem. "P'r'aps," he said, after a pause, in which he had vainly tried to discover how his daughter wished him to answer, "p'r'aps; he's older and more sot. There ain't much difference, though. In five or six years Seth'll be a heap stronger than the schoolmaster; but now," he added quickly, reading his daughter's face, "he ain't man enough. He must fill out first."

She looked up with bright satisfaction, and twining her hands round his arm began coaxingly:

"I'm goin' to ask you for somethin', father. You know you told me that on my birthday you'd give me most anythin' I wanted. Wall, I want somethin' this month, not next, as soon as I ken get it—a pianner. I guess the settin'-room would look smarter-like, an' I'd learn to play. All the girls do East," she added, pouting.

"Yes," the Elder agreed thoughtfully, doubting whether he should follow her lead eastwards, "I reckon that's so. I'll see about it right off, Loo. I oughter hev thought of it before. But now, right off," and as he spoke he laid his large hand with studied carelessness on her shoulder—he was afraid that an intentional caress might be inopportune.

"I'm cert'in Mr. Bancroft's sisters play, an' I—" she looked down nervously for a moment, and then, still blushing deeply, changed the attack: "He's smart, ain't he, father? He'd make a good lawyer, wouldn't he?"

"I reckon he would," replied the Elder.

"I'm so glad," the girl went on hurriedly, as if afraid to give herself time to think of what she was about to say, "for, father, he wants to study in an office East and he hain't got the money, and—oh, father!" she threw her arms round his neck and hid her face on his shoulder, "I want to go with him."

The Elder's heart seemed to stop beating, but he could not hold his loved one in his arms and at the same time realize his own pain. He stroked the bowed head gently, and after a pause:

"He could study with Lawyer Barkman in

Wichita, couldn't he? and then you'd be to hum still. No. Wall! Thar!" and again came a pause of silence. "I reckon, anyhow, you knew I'd help you. Didn't you now?"

His daughter drew herself out of his embrace. Recalled thus to the matter in hand he asked: "Did he say how much money 'twould take?"

"Two or three thousand dollars"—and she scanned his face anxiously—"for studyin' and gettin' an office and everythin' in New York. Things are dearer there."

"Wall, I guess we kin about cover that with a squeeze. It'll be full all I kin manage to onc't—that and the pianner. I've no one to think of but you, Loo, only you. That's what I've bin workin' for, to give you a fair start, and I'm glad I kin jess about do it. I'd sorter take it better if he'd done the studyin' by himself before. No! wall, it don't make much difference p'r'aps. Anyway he works, and Mr. Crew thinks him enough eddicated even for the Ministry. He does, and that's a smart lot. I guess he'll get along all right." Delighted with the expression of intent happiness in his daughter's eyes, he continued: "He's young yet, and couldn't be expected to hev done the studyin' and law and everythin'. You kin be sartin that the old man'll do all he knows to help start you fair. All I kin. If you're sot upon it! That's enough fer me, I guess, ef you're rale sot on it, and you don't think 'twould be better like to wait a little. He could study with Barkman fer a year anyway without losin' time. No! wall, wall. I'm right thar when you want me. I'll go to work to do what I kin . . . .

"P'r'aps we might sell off and go East, too. The farm's worth money now it's all settled up round hyar. The mother and me and Jake could get along, I reckon, East or West. I know more'n I did when I came out in '59.

"I'm glad you've told me. I think a heap more of him now. There must be a pile of good in anyone you like, Loo. Anyhow he's lucky." And he stroked her crumpled dress awkwardly, but with an infinite tenderness.

"I've got to go now, father," she exclaimed, suddenly remembering the time. "But there!"—and again she threw her arms round his neck and kissed him. "You've made me very happy. I've got to go right off, and you've all the chores to do, so I mustn't keep you any longer."

She hurried to the road along which Jake would have to come with the news of the fight. When she reached the top of the bluff whence the road fell rapidly to the creek, no one was in sight. She sat down and gave herself up to joyous anticipations.

"What would George say to her news? Where should they be married?"—a myriad questions agitated her. But a glance down the slope from time to time checked her pleasure. At last she saw her brother running towards her. He had taken off his boots and stockings; they were slung round his neck, and his bare feet pattered along in the thick, white dust of the prairie track. His haste made his sister's heart beat in gasps of fear. Down the hill she sped, and met him on the bridge.

"Wall?" she asked quietly, but the colour had

left her cheeks, and Jake was not to be deceived so easily.

"Wall what?" he answered defiantly, trying to get breath. "I hain't said nothin'."

"Oh, you mean boy!" she cried indignantly. "I'll never help you again when father wants to whip you —never! Tell me this minute what happened. Is *he* hurt?"

"Is who hurt?" asked her brother, glorying in superiority of knowledge, and the power to tease with impunity.

"Tell me right off," she said, taking him by the collar in her exasperation, "or——"

"I'll tell you nothin' till you leave go of me," was the sullen reply. But then the overmastering impulse ran away with him, and he broke out:

"Oh, Loo! I jest seed everythin'. 'Twar a high old fight! They wuz all there, Seth Stevens, Richards, Monkey Bill—all of 'em, when schoolmaster rode up. He was still—looked like he wanted to hear a class recite. He hitched up Jack and come to 'em, liftin' his hat. Oh, 'twas O.K., you bet! Then they took off their clo's. Seth Stevens jerked hisn loose on the ground, but schoolmaster stood by himself, and folded hisn up like ma makes me fold mine at night. Then they comed together and Seth Stevens he jest drew off and tried to land him one, but schoolmaster sorter moved aside and took him on the nose, an' Seth he sot down, with the blood runnin' all over him. An'—an'—that's all. Every time Seth Stevens hauled off to hit, schoolmaster was thar first. It war bully!—That's all. An' I seed everythin'. You kin bet your life

on that! An' then Richards and the rest come to him an' said as how Seth Stevens was faintin', an' schoolmaster he ran to the crick an' brought water and put over him. An' then I runned to tell you —schoolmaster's strong, I guess, stronger nor pappa. I seed him put on his vest, an' Seth Stevens he was settin' up, all blood and water on his face, streaky like; he did look bad. But, Loo—say, Loo! Why didn't schoolmaster when he got him down the first time, jest stomp on his face with his heels?—he had his boots on—an' that's how Seth Stevens broke Tom Cooper's jaw when *they* fit."

The girl was white, and trembling from head to foot, as the boy ended his narrative, and looked inquiringly into her face. She could not answer. Indeed, she had hardly heard the question. The thought of what might have happened to her lover appalled her, and terror and remorse held her heart as in a vice. But, oh!—and the hot tears came into her eyes—she'd tell him when they met how sorry she was for it all, and how bad she had been, and how she hated herself. She had acted foolish, very; but she hadn't meant it. She'd be more careful in future, much more careful. How brave he was and kind! How like him it was to get the water! Oh! if he'd only come.

All this while Jake looked at her curiously; at length he said, "Say, Loo, s'pose he'd had his eye plugged out."

"Go away—do!" she exclaimed angrily. "I believe you boys jest love fightin' like dogs."

Jake disappeared to tell and retell the tale to anyone who cared to listen.

Half an hour later Loo, who had climbed the bluff to command the view, heard the sound of Jack's feet on the wooden bridge. A moment or two more and the buggy drew up beside her; the schoolmaster bent forward and spoke, without a trace of emotion in his voice:

"Won't you get in and let me drive you home, Miss Loo?" His victory had put him in a good humour, without, however, altering his critical estimate of the girl. The quiet, controlled tone of his voice chilled and pained her, but her emotions were too recent and too acute to be restrained.

"Oh, George!" she said, leaning forward against the buggy, and scanning his face intently. "How can you speak so? You ain't hurt, are you?"

"No!" he answered lightly. "You didn't expect I should be, did you?" The tone was cold, a little sarcastic even.

Again she felt hurt; she scarcely knew why; the sneer was too far-fetched for her to understand it:

"Go and put the horse up, and then come back. I'll wait right here for you."

He did as he was told, and in ten minutes was by her side again. After a long pause, she began, with quivering lips:

"George, I'm sorry—so sorry. 'Twas all my fault! But I didn't know"—and she choked down a sob—"I didn't think.

"I want you to tell me how your sisters act and—an' what they wear and do. I'll try to act like them. Then I'd be good, shouldn't I?

"They play the pianner, don't they?" He was forced to confess that one of them did.

"An' they talk like you?"

"Yes."

"An' they're good always? Oh, George, I'm jest too sorry for anythin', an' now—now I'm too glad!" and she burst into tears. He kissed and consoled her as in duty bound. He understood this mood as little as he had understood her challenge to love. He was not in sympathy with her; she had no ideal of conduct, no notion of dignity. Some suspicion of this estrangement must have dawned upon the girl, or else she was irritated by his acquiescence in her various phases of self-humiliation. All at once she dashed the tears from her eyes, and winding herself out of his arms, exclaimed:

"See here, George Bancroft! I'll jest learn all they know—pianner and all. I ken, and I will. I'll begin right now. You'll see!" And her blue eyes flashed with the glitter of steel, while her chin was thrown up in defiant vanity and self-assertion.

He watched her with indifferent curiosity; the abrupt changes of mood repelled him. His depreciatory thoughts of her, his resolution not to be led away again by her beauty influencing him, he noticed the keen hardness of the look, and felt, perhaps out of a spirit of antagonism, that he disliked it.

After a few quieting phrases, which, though they sprang rather from the head than the heart, seemed to achieve their aim, he changed the subject, by pointing across the creek and asking:

"Whose corn is that?"

"Father's, I guess!"

"I thought that was the Indian territory?"

"It is!"

"Is one allowed to sow corn there and to fence off the ground? Don't the Indians object?"

"'Tain't healthy for Indians about here," she answered carelessly, "I hain't ever seen one. I guess it's allowed; anyhow, the corn's there an' father'll have it cut right soon."

It seemed to Bancroft that they had not a thought in common. Wrong done by her own folk did not even interest her. At once he moved towards the house and the girl followed him, feeling acutely disappointed and humiliated, which state of mind quickly became one of rebellious self-esteem. She guessed that other men thought big shucks of her anyway. And with this reflection she tried to comfort herself.

A WEEK or ten days later, Bancroft came downstairs one morning early and found the ground covered with hoar-frost, though the sun had already warmed the air. Elder Conklin, in his shirt-sleeves, was cleaning his boots by the wood pile. When he had finished with the brush, but not a moment sooner, he put it down near his boarder. His greeting, a mere nod, had not prepared the schoolmaster for the question:

"Kin you drive kyows?"

"I think so; I've done it as a boy."

"Wall, to-day's Saturday. There ain't no school, and I've some cattle to drive to the scales in Eureka. They're in the brush yonder, ef you'd help. That is, supposin' you've nothin' to do."

"No. I've nothing else to do, and shall be glad to help you if I can."

Miss Loo pouted when she heard that her lover would be away the greater part of the day, but it pleased her to think that her father had asked him for his help, and she resigned herself, stipulating only that he should come right back from Eureka.

After breakfast the two started. Their way lay along the roll of ground which looked down upon the creek. They rode together in silence, until the Elder asked:

"You ain't a Member, air you?"

"No."

"That's bad. I kinder misdoubted it las' Sunday; but I wasn't sartin. Ef your callin' and election ain't sure, I guess Mr. Crew oughter talk to you."

These phrases were jerked out with long pauses separating them, and then the Elder was ominously silent.

In various ways Bancroft attempted to draw him into conversation—in vain. The Elder answered in monosyllables, or not at all. Presently he entered the woods on the left, and soon halted before the shoot-entrance to a roughly-built corral.

"The kyows is yonder," he remarked; "ef you'll drive them hyar, I'll count them as they come in."

The schoolmaster turned his horse's head in the direction pointed out. He rode for some minutes through the wood without seeing a single animal. Under ordinary circumstances this would have surprised him; but now he was absorbed in thinking

of Conklin and his peculiarities, wondering at his habit of silence and its cause:

"Has he nothing to say? Or does he think a great deal without being able to find words to express his thoughts?"

A prolonged moan, a lowing of cattle in pain, came to his ears. He made directly for the sound, and soon saw the herd huddled together by the snake-fence which zigzagged along the bank of the creek. He went on till he came to the boundary fence which ran at right angles to the water, and then turning tried to drive the animals towards the corral. He met, however, with unexpected difficulties. He had brought a stock-whip with him, and used it with some skill, though without result. The bullocks and cows swerved from the lash, but before they had gone ten yards they wheeled and bolted back. At first this manœuvre amused him. The Elder, he thought, has brought me to do what he couldn't do himself; I'll show him I can drive. But no! in spite of all his efforts, the cattle would not be driven. He grew warm, and set himself to the work. In a quarter of an hour his horse was in a lather, and his whip had flayed one or two of the bullocks, but there they stood again with necks outstretched towards the creek, lowing piteously. He could not understand it. Reluctantly he made up his mind to acquaint the Elder with the inexplicable fact. He had gone some two hundred yards when his tired horse stumbled. Holding him up, Bancroft saw he had tripped over a mound of white dust. A thought struck him. He threw himself off the horse, and tasted the stuff; he was right; it was

salt! No wonder he could not drive the cattle; no wonder they lowed as if in pain—the ground had been salted.

He remounted and hastened to the corral. He found the Elder sitting on his horse by the shoot, the bars of which were down.

"I can't move those cattle!"

"You said you knew how to drive."

"I do, but they are mad with thirst; no one can do anything with them. Besides, in this sun they might die on the road."

"Hum."

"Let them drink; they'll go on afterwards."

"Hum." And the Elder remained for some moments silent. Then he said, as if thinking aloud: "It's eight miles to Eureka; they'll be thirsty again before they get to the town."

Bancroft, too, had had his wits at work, and now answered the other's thought. "I guess so; if they're allowed just a mouthful or two they can be driven, and long before they reach Eureka they'll be as thirsty as ever."

Without a word in reply the Elder turned his horse and started off at a lope. In ten minutes the two men had taken down the snake-fence for a distance of some fifty yards, and the cattle had rushed through the gap and were drinking greedily.

After they had had a deep draught or two, Bancroft urged his horse into the stream and began to drive them up the bank. They went easily enough now, and ahead of them rode the Elder, his long whitey-brown holland coat fluttering behind him. In half an hour Bancroft had got the herd into the

corral. The Elder counted the three hundred and sixty-two beasts with painstaking carefulness as they filed by.

The prairie-track to Eureka led along the creek, and in places ran close to it without any intervening fence. In an hour under that hot October sun the cattle had again become thirsty, and it needed all Bancroft's energy and courage to keep them from dashing into the water. Once or twice indeed it was a toss-up whether or not they would rush over him. He was nearly exhausted when some four hours after the start they came in sight of the little town. Here he let the herd into the creek. Glad of the rest, he sat on his panting horse and wiped the perspiration from his face. After the cattle had drunk their fill, he moved them quietly along the road, while the water dripped from their mouths and bodies. At the scales the Elder met the would-be purchaser, who as soon as he caught sight of the stock burst into a laugh.

"Say, Conklin," he cried out, "I guess you've given them cattle enough to drink, but I don't buy water for meat. No, sir; you bet, I don't."

"I didn't allow you would," replied the Elder gravely; "but the track was long and hot; so they drank in the crik."

"Wall," resumed the dealer, half disarmed by this confession, which served the Elder's purpose better than any denial could have done, "I guess you'll take off fifty pound a head for that water."

"I guess not," was the answer. "Twenty pound of water's reckoned to be about as much as a kyow kin drink."

The trading began and continued to Bancroft's annoyance for more than half an hour. At last it was settled that thirty pounds' weight should be allowed on each beast for the water it had drunk. When this conclusion had been arrived at, it took but a few minutes to weigh the animals and pay the price agreed upon.

The Elder now declared himself ready to go "to hum" and get somethin' to eat. In sullen silence Bancroft remounted, and side by side they rode slowly towards the farm. The schoolmaster's feelings may easily be imagined. He had been disgusted by the cunning and hypocrisy of the trick, and the complacent expression of the Elder's countenance irritated him intensely. As he passed place after place where the cattle had given him most trouble in the morning, anger took possession of him, and at length forced itself to speech.

"See here, Elder Conklin!" he began abruptly, "I suppose you call yourself a Christian. You look down on me because I'm not a Member. Yet, first of all, you salt cattle for days till they're half mad with thirst, then after torturing them by driving them for hours along this road side by side with water, you act lies with the man you've sold them to, and end up by cheating him. You know as well as I do that each of those steers had drunk sixty-five pounds' weight of water at least; so you got" (he couldn't use the word "stole" even in his anger, while the Elder was looking at him) "more than a dollar a head too much. That's the kind of Christianity you practise. I don't like such Christians, and I'll leave your house as soon as I can. I am

ashamed that I didn't tell the dealer you were deceiving him. I feel as if I had been a party to the cheat."

While the young man was speaking the Elder looked at him intently. At certain parts of the accusation Conklin's face became rigid, but he said nothing. A few minutes later, having skirted the orchard, they dismounted at the stable-door.

After he had unsaddled his horse and thrown it some Indian corn, Bancroft hastened to the house; he wanted to be alone. On the stoop he met Loo and said to her hastily:

"I can't talk now, Loo; I'm tired out and half crazy. I must go to my room and rest. After supper I'll tell you everything. Please don't keep me now."

Supper that evening was a silent meal. The Elder did not speak once; the two young people were absorbed in their own reflections, and Mrs. Conklin's efforts to make talk were effectual only when she turned to Jake. Mrs. Conklin, indeed, was seldom successful in anything she attempted. She was a woman of fifty, or thereabouts, and her face still showed traces of former good looks, but the light had long left her round, dark eyes, and the colour her cheeks, and with years her figure had grown painfully thin. She was one of the numerous class who delight in taking strangers into their confidence. Unappreciated, as a rule, by those who know them, they seek sympathy from polite indifference or curiosity. Before he had been a day in the house Bancroft had heard from Mrs. Conklin all about her early life. Her father had been a large

farmer in Amherst County, Massachusetts; her childhood had been comfortable and happy: "We always kept one hired man right through the winter, and in summer often had eight and ten; and, though you mightn't think it now, I was the belle of all the parties." Dave (her husband) had come to work for her father, and she had taken a likin' to him, though he was such a "hard case." She told of Dave's gradual conversion and of the Revivalist Minister, who was an Abolitionist as well, and had proclaimed the duty of emigrating to Kansas to prevent it from becoming a slave state. Dave, it appeared, had taken up the idea zealously, and had persuaded her to go with him. Her story became pathetic in spite of her self-pity as she related the hardships of that settlement in the wilds, and described her loneliness, her shivering terror when her husband was away hauling logs for their first home, and news came that the slave-traders from Missouri had made another raid upon the scattered Abolitionist farmers. The woman had evidently been unfit for such rude transplanting. She dwelt upon the fact that her husband had never understood her feelings. If he had, she wouldn't have minded so much. Marriage was not what girls thought; she had not been happy since she left her father's house, and so forth. The lament was based on an unworthy and futile egoism, but her whining timidity appeared to Bancroft inexplicable. He did not see that just as a shrub pales and dies away under the branches of a great tree, so a weak nature is apt to be further enfeebled by association with a strong and self-contained character. In those early days

of loneliness and danger the Elder's steadfastness and reticence had prevented him from affording to his wife the sympathy which might have enabled her to overcome her fears. "He never talked anythin' over with me," was the burden of her complaint. Solitude had killed every power in her save vanity, and the form her vanity took was peculiarly irritating to her husband, and in a lesser degree to her daughter, for neither the Elder nor Loo would have founded self-esteem on adventitious advantages of upbringing. Accordingly, Mrs. Conklin was never more than an uncomfortable shadow in her own house, and this evening her repeated attempts to bring about a semblance of conversation only made the silence and preoccupation of the others painfully evident.

As soon as the supper things were cleared away, Loo signalled to Bancroft to accompany her to the stoop, where she asked him what had happened.

"I insulted the Elder," he said, "and I told him I should leave his house as soon as I could."

"You don't mean that!" she exclaimed. "You must take that back, George. I'll speak to pappa; he'll mind me."

"No," he replied firmly; "speaking won't do any good. I've made up my mind. It's impossible for me to stay here."

"Then you don't care for me. But that's not so. Say it's not so, George. Say you'll stay—and I'll come down this evening after the old folks have gone to bed, and sit with you. There!"

Of course the man yielded to a certain extent, the pleading face upturned to his was too seductive

to be denied, but he would not promise more than that he would tell her what had taken place, and consult with her.

Shortly after nine o'clock, as usual, Mr. and Mrs. Conklin retired. Half an hour later Bancroft and Loo were seated together in the corner of the back stoop. They sat like lovers, his arm about her waist, while he told his story. She expressed relief; she had feared it would be much worse; he had only to say he didn't mean anythin', and she'd persuade her father to forget and forgive. But the schoolmaster would not consent to that. He had meant and did mean every word, and could take back nothing. And when she appealed to his affection, he could only repeat that he'd think it over. "You know I like you, Loo, but I can't do impossibilities. It's unfortunate, perhaps, but it's done and can't be undone." And then, annoyed at being pressed further, he thought they had better go in: it was very cold; she'd catch a chill if she stayed longer, and there was no sense in that. The girl, seeing that her pleading was of no avail, grew angry; his love was good enough to talk about, but it could not be worth much if he denied her so little a thing; it didn't matter, though, she'd get along somehow, she guessed—here they were startled by the sound of a door opening. Loo glided quickly round the corner of the stoop, and entered the house. Bancroft following her heard the back door shut, and someone go down the steps. He could not help looking to see who was on foot at such an untimely hour, and to his surprise perceived the Elder in a night-shirt, walking with bare feet to-

wards the stables through the long grass already stiff with frost. Before the white figure had disappeared Bancroft assured himself that Loo had gone up to bed the front way. Curiosity conquering his first impulse, which had been to follow her example, he went after the Elder, without, however, intending to play the spy. When he had passed through the stables and got to the top of the slope overlooking the creek, he caught sight of the Elder twenty yards away at the water's edge. In mute surprise he watched the old man tie his night-shirt up under his armpits, wade into the ice-cold water, kneel down, and begin what was evidently meant to be a prayer. His first words were conventional, but gradually his earnestness and excitement overcame his sense of the becoming, and he talked of what lay near his heart in disjointed phrases.

"That young man to-day jes' jumped on me! He told me I'd plagued them cattle half to death, and I'd acted lies and cheated Ramsdell out of three hundred dollars. 'Twas all true. I s'pose I did plague the cattle, though I've often been as thirsty as they were—after eatin' salt pork and workin' all day in the sun. I didn't think of hurtin' them when I salted the floor. But I did act to deceive Ramsdell, and I reckon I made nigh on three hundred dollars out of the deal. 'Twas wrong. But, O God!" —and unconsciously the old man's voice rose—"You know all my life. You know everythin'. You know I never lied or cheated anyone fer myself. I've worked hard and honest fer more'n forty years, and always been poor. I never troubled about it, and I don't now, but fer Loo.

"She's so pretty and young. Jes' like a flower wants sunshine, she wants pleasure, and when she don't git it, she feels bad. She's so young and soft. Now she wants a pile of money and a pianner, and I couldn't git it fer her no other way. I had to cheat.

"O Lord, ef I could kneel down hyar and say I repented with godly repentance fer sin and determination never to sin agen, I'd do it, and ask you to pardon me for Jesus' sake, but I kain't repent—I jes' kain't! You see my heart, O God! and you know I'll go on cheatin' ef that'll get Loo what she wants. An' so I've come down hyar to say that Loo ain't with me in the cheatin'; it's all my sin, I know you punish sin. The stiff-necked sinner ought to be punished. Wall; I'll take the punishment. Put it right on to me—that's justice. But, O Lord! leave Loo out; she don't know nothin' about it. That's why I've come down hyar into the water to show I'm willin' to bear what you send. Amen, O Lord God! In Jesus' name, Amen."

And he rose quietly, came out of the creek, wiped his dripping limbs with his hand as well as he could, let down his night-shirt, and prepared to climb the bank. Needless to say, Bancroft had slipped through the stables and reached the house before the Elder could get within sight of him.

When alone in his room the schoolmaster grew a little ashamed of himself. There could be no doubt of the Elder's sincerity, and he had insulted him. The Elder had sacrificed his principles; had done violence to the habits of his life, and shame to his faith and practice—all in order that his daughter might have her "pianner." The grotesque pronun-

ciation of the word appeared pathetic to Bancroft now; it brought moisture into his eyes. What a fine old fellow Conklin was! Of course he wished to bear the whole burden of his sin and its punishment. It would be easy to go to him on the morrow and beg his pardon. Wrong done as the Elder did it, he felt, was more than right. What a Christian at heart! And what a man!

But the girl who asked for such a sacrifice—what was she? All the jealousy, all the humiliation he had suffered on her account, came back to him; she would have her father steal provided she got her piano. How vain she was and self-willed; without any fine moral feeling or proper principle! He would be worse than a fool to give his life to such a woman. If she could drive her father—and such a father—to theft, in what wrongdoing might she not involve her husband? He was warned in time; he would not be guilty of such irreparable folly. He would match her selfishness with prudence. Who could blame him? That was what the hard glitter in her eyes betokened—cold selfishness; and he had thought of her as Hebe—a Hebe who would give poisoned wine to those who loved her. He was well saved from that.

The old Greek word called her up before him, and the spell of her physical charm stole over his astonished senses like perfumed summer air. Sitting beside her that evening, his arm round her waist, he had felt the soft, full curves of her form, and thinking of it his pulses throbbed. How fair her face was! That appealing air made her irresistible; and even when she was angry, how splen-

didly handsome! What a pity she should be hard and vulgar! He felt estranged from her, yet still cherished the bitterness of disappointment. She was detestably vain, common and selfish; he would be on his guard.

NEXT day at breakfast Mr. Morris came in. He was an ordinary young Western farmer, rough but kindly, ill-educated but sensible. When his appetite was satisfied he wanted to know whether they had heard the news.

"No," Mrs. Conklin replied eagerly, "we've heard nothing unless p'r'aps the Elder in Eureka"—but her husband shook his head, and Morris went on:

"Folks say the Government in Washington has sent General Custer out with troops to pertect the Indian Territory. Away East they think the settlers have been stealing the Reserve, an' the soldiers are coming with surveyors to draw the line again."

After a pause, "That seems right," said the Elder; "thar' ain't nothin' agen that."

"But you've ploughed and raised crops on the Indian land across the crik," objected Morris; "we all hev. Air we to give it up?"

There was no answer.

"Anyway," Morris continued: "Custer's at Wichita now. He'll be here in a day or two, an' we've called a meetin' in the school-house for this evenin', an' we hope you'll be on hand. 'Tain't likely we're goin' to stand by an' see our crops destroyed. We must hold together, and all'll come right."

"That's true," said the Elder thinking aloud, "and

good. Ef we all held together there'd not be much wrong done."

"Then I kin tell the boys," resumed Morris, rising, "that you'll be with us, Elder. All us young uns hold by you, an' what you say, we'll do, every time."

"Wall," replied the Elder slowly, "I don't know. I kain't see my way to goin'. I've always done fer myself by myself, and I mean to—right through; but the meetin' seems a good idee. I'm not contradictin' that. It seems strong. I don't go much though on meetin's; they hain't ever helped me. But a meetin' seems strong—for them that likes it."

With this assurance Morris was fain to be satisfied and go his way.

Bancroft had listened to the colloquy with new feelings. Prepared to regard with admiration all that the Elder said or did, it was not difficult for him now to catch the deeper meaning of the uncouth words. He was drawn to the Elder by moral sympathy, and his early training tended to strengthen this attraction. It was right, he felt, that the Elder should take his own course, fearing nothing that man could do.

In the evening he met Loo. She supposed with a careless air that he was goin' to pack them leather trunks of his.

"No, I've reconsidered it," he answered. "I'm going to beg your father's pardon, and take back all I said to him."

"Oh! then you do care for me, George," cried the girl enthusiastically, "an' we ken be happy again. I've been real miserable since last night; I cried myself to sleep, so I did. Now I know you

love me I'll do anythin' you wish, anythin'. I'll learn the pianner; you see if I don't."

"Perhaps," he replied harshly, the old anger growing bitter in him at the mention of the "pianner" —"perhaps it would be better if you gave up the idea of the piano; that *costs* too much," he added significantly, "far too much. If you'd read good books and try to live in the thought of the time, it would be better. Wisdom is to be won cheaply and by all, but success in an art depends upon innate qualities."

"I see," she exclaimed, flaming up, "you think I can't learn to play like your sister, and I'm very ignorant, and had better read and get to know all other people have said, and you call that wisdom. I don't. Memory ain't sense, I guess; and to talk like you ain't everythin'."

The attack pricked his vanity. He controlled himself, however, and took up the argument: "Memory is not sense, perhaps; but still one ought to know the best that has been said and done in the world. It is easier to climb the ladder when others have shown us the rungs. And surely to talk correctly is better than to talk incorrectly."

"It don't matter much, I reckon, so long as one gets your meaning, and as for the ladder, a monkey could do that."

The irrelevant retort puzzled him, and her tone increased his annoyance. But why, he asked himself, should he trouble to lift her to a higher level of thought? He relapsed into silence.

With wounded heart the girl waited; she was hurt, afraid he did not care for her, could not even guess

how she had offended him; but, as he would not speak, her pride came to her aid, and she remarked:

"I'm asked out this evenin', so I'll have to get ready and go. Good night, George Bancroft."

"Good night, Miss Loo," he replied calmly, though the pain he suffered proved that jealousy may outlive love. "I think I shall go to this meeting at the school-house."

They parted. Loo went upstairs to her room to cry over her misery and George's coldness; to wish she had been better taught, and had learned her lessons in school carefully, for then he might have been kinder. She wondered how she should get books to read. It was difficult. Besides, couldn't he see that she was quick and would learn everythin' afterwards if he'd be good to her. Why did he act so? Why!

Bancroft went to the meeting, and found the house crowded. A young farmer from the next county was present, who told how a United States officer with twelve men and a surveyor had come and drawn the boundary line, torn up his fences, and trampled down the corn which he had planted in the Indian Reserve. The meeting at once adopted the following resolution:

"In view of the fact that the land cultivated by American citizens in or upon the Indian Reserve has never been used or cultivated by the Indians, who keep to the woods, and that it is God's will that land should bring forth fruit for the sustenance of man, we are resolved to stand upon our rights as citizens and to defend the same against all aggressors."

Everyone signed this document, copies of which were to be sent to General Custer, and also to the President, to the Senate, and to Congress. It was arranged further to write to their own representatives at Washington giving an account of the situation.

After this the meeting broke up, but not before all present had agreed to stand by any of their number who should resist the troops.

When Bancroft returned home Mr. and Mrs. Conklin were still up, and he related to them all that had taken place. The Elder rose and stretched himself without having made a remark. In a whisper Bancroft asked Mrs. Conklin to let him have a word with her husband. As soon as they were alone, he began:

"Mr. Conklin, I insulted you yesterday. I am sorry for it. I hope you'll forgive me."

"Yes," replied the Elder meditatively, overlooking the proffered hand, "yes, that's Christian, I reckon. But the truth's the truth." Turning abruptly to leave the room, he added: "The corn's ripe, waitin' to be cut; ef the United States troops don't eat it all up we'll have a good year." There was a light in his steady eyes which startled the schoolmaster into all sorts of conjectures.

A day or two later, the Conklins and Bancroft were seated at dinner when a knock came at the door. "Come in!" said Mrs. Conklin, and a young officer appeared in the uniform of the United States cavalry. He paused on the threshold, lifted his cap, and apologized for his intrusion:

"Elder Conklin, I believe?" The Elder nodded his head, but continued eating. "My business isn't

pleasant, I fear, but it needn't take long. I'm sent by General Custer to draw the boundary line between the State of Kansas and the Indian Reserve, to break down all fences erected by citizens of the United States in the Territory, and to destroy such crops as they may have planted there. I regret to say our surveyor tells me the boundary line here is Cottonwood Creek, and I must notify you that tomorrow about noon I shall be here to carry out my orders, and to destroy the crops and fences found on the further side of the creek."

Before withdrawing he begged pardon again, this time for the short notice he was compelled to give—a concession apparently to Miss Conklin's appearance and encouraging smiles.

"Oh, papa!" cried Loo, as he disappeared, "why didn't you ask him to have some dinner? He jest looked splendid, and that uniform's too lovely."

The Elder made no answer. Neither the courteous menace of the lieutenant nor his daughter's reproach seemed to have had any effect upon him. He went on with his dinner.

Loo's outspoken admiration of the officer did not move Bancroft as she had anticipated. It simply confirmed his worst suspicions. His nature was neither deep nor passionate; he had always lived in the conventions which the girl constantly outraged, and they now exercised their influence. Moreover, he had self-possession enough to see that she meant to annoy him. He was exceedingly anxious to know what the Elder intended to do, and what Loo might think or feel did not interest him greatly.

A few hours later a clue was given to him: Jake

came and told him as a piece of news that "Pa's shot-gun ain't in his room." Bancroft could not rid himself of the thought that the fact was significant. But the evening passed away quietly; Loo busied herself with some work, and the Elder seemed content to watch her.

At breakfast next morning nothing of moment happened. Bancroft took occasion to say that he was coming home early to dinner. On his return from school, some three hours after, he saw a troop of horsemen riding up the valley a mile or so away. With quickened pulses he sprang up the steps and met the Elder in the doorway.

"There they come!" he said involuntarily, pointing to the little cloud of dust.

"Hum," grunted the Elder, and left the stoop, going towards the outhouses.

Bancroft turned into the parlour, where he found Mrs. Conklin. She seemed to be irritated, and not at all anxious, as he had expected:

"Did you see the Elder?"

"Yes," he replied. "He went to the barn. I thought of accompanying him, but was afraid he wouldn't like it."

"I guess he's worrying about that corn," Mrs. Conklin explained. "When he broke that land I told him 'twould bring trouble, but he never minds what anyone says to him. He should listen to his wife, though, sometimes, shouldn't he? But bein' a man p'r'aps you'll take his part. Anyway, it has all happened as I knew it would. And what'll he do now? that's what I'd like to know. All that corn lost and the fences—he jest worked himself to death

on those logs—all lost now. We shall be bare poor again. It's too bad. I've never had any money since I left home." And here Mrs. Conklin's face puckered itself up as if she were about to cry, but the impulse of vanity being stronger, she burst out angrily: "I think it's real wicked of the Elder. I told him so. If he'd ask that young man to let him cut the corn, I'm sure he wouldn't refuse. But he'll never take my advice, or even answer me. It's too aggravatin' when I know I'm right."

He looked at her in astonishment. She had evidently no inkling of what might occur, no vivid understanding of her husband's character. Preferring to leave her in ignorance, he said lightly, "I hope it'll be all right," and, in order to change the subject, added, "I've not seen Miss Loo, and Jake wasn't in school this morning."

"Oh, Mr. Bancroft, if anythin' has happened to Jake!" and Mrs. Conklin sank weakly into the nearest chair; "but thar ain't no swimmin' nor skatin' now. When he comes in I'll frighten him; I'll threaten to tell the Elder. He mustn't miss his schoolin', for he's real bright, ain't he?—Loo? Her father sent her to the Morrises, about somethin'—I don't know what."

When Bancroft came downstairs, taking with him a small revolver, his only weapon, he could not find the Elder either in the outbuildings or in the stable. Remembering, however, that the soldiers could only get to the threatened cornfield by crossing the bridge, which lay a few hundred yards higher up the creek, he made his way thither with all speed. When he reached the descent, he saw the Elder in

the inevitable, long, whitey-brown holland coat, walking over the bridge. In a minute or two he had overtaken him. As the Elder did not speak, he began:

"I thought I'd come with you, Elder. I don't know that I'm much good, but I sympathize with you, and I'd like to help you if I could."

"Yes," replied the Elder, acknowledging thereby the proffered aid. "But I guess you kain't. I guess not," he repeated by way of emphasis.

In silence the pair went on to the broad field of maize. At the corner of the fence, the Elder stopped and said, as if speaking to himself:

"It runs, I reckon, seventy-five bushel to the acre, and there are two hundred acres." After a lengthened pause he continued: "That makes nigh on three thousand dollars. I must hev spent two hundred dollars this year in hired labour on that ground, and the half ain't cut yet. Thar's a pile of money and work on that quarter-section."

A few minutes more passed in silence. Bancroft did not know what to say, for the calm seriousness of the Elder repelled sympathy. As he looked about him there showed on the rise across the creek a knot of United States cavalry, the young lieutenant riding in front with a civilian, probably the surveyor, by his side. Bancroft turned and found that the Elder had disappeared in the corn. He followed quickly, but as he swung himself on to the fence the Elder came from behind a stook with a burnished shot-gun in his right hand, and said decisively:

"Don't come in hyar. 'Taint your corn and you've no cause to mix yourself in this fuss."

Bancroft obeyed involuntarily. The next moment he began to resent the authority conveyed in the prohibition; he ought to have protested, to have insisted—but now it was too late. As the soldiers rode up the lieutenant dismounted and threw his reins to a trooper. He stepped towards the fence, and touching his cap carelessly, remarked:

"Well, Mr. Conklin, here we are." The earnestness of the Elder appeared to have its effect, too, upon him, for he went on more respectfully: "I regret that I've orders to pull down your fences and destroy the crop. But there's nothing else to be done."

"Yes," said the Elder gravely, "I guess you know your orders. But you mustn't pull down my fence," and as he spoke he drew his shot-gun in front of him, and rested his hands upon the muzzle, "nor destroy this crop." And the long upper lip came down over the lower, giving an expression of obstinate resolve to the hard, tanned face.

"You don't seem to understand," replied the lieutenant a little impatiently; "this land belongs to the Indians; it has been secured to them by the United States Government, and you've no business either to fence it in or plant it."

"That's all right," answered Conklin, in the same steady, quiet, reasonable tone. "That may all be jes' so, but them Indians warn't usin' the land; they did no good with it. I broke this prairie ten years ago, and it took eight hosses to do it, and I've sowed it ever sence till the crops hev grown good, and now you come and tell me you're goin' to tromple down the corn and pull up the fences. No, sir, you ain't —that ain't right."

"Right or wrong," the officer retorted, "I have to carry out my orders, not reason about them. Here, sergeant, let three men hold the horses and get to work on this fence."

As the sergeant advanced and put his hand on the top layer of the heavy snake-fence, the Elder levelled his shot-gun and said:

"Ef you pull down that bar I'll shoot."

The sergeant took his hand from the bar quickly, and turned to his commander as if awaiting further instructions.

"Mr. Conklin," exclaimed the lieutenant, moving forward, "this is pure foolishness; we're twelve to one, and we're only soldiers and have to obey orders. I'm sorry, but I must do my duty."

"That's so," said the Elder, lowering his gun deliberately. "That's so, I guess. You hev your duty—p'r'aps I hev mine. 'Tain't my business to teach you yours."

For a moment the lieutenant seemed to be undecided; then he spoke:

"Half-a-dozen of you advance and cover him with your rifles. Now, Mr. Conklin, if you resist you must take the consequences. Rebellion against the United States Government don't generally turn out well—for the rebel. Sergeant, down with the bar."

The Elder stood as if he had not heard what had been said to him, but when the sergeant laid hold of the bar, the shot-gun went up again to the old man's shoulder, and he said:

"Ef you throw down that bar I'll shoot *you*."

Again the sergeant paused, and looked at his officer.

At this juncture Bancroft could not help inter-

fering. The Elder's attitude had excited in him more than mere admiration; wonder, reverence thrilled him, and his blood boiled at the thought that the old man might possibly be shot down. He stepped forward and said:

"Sir, you must not order your men to fire. You will raise the whole country against you if you do. This is surely a law case, and not to be decided by violence. Such a decision is not to be taken without reflection and distinct instructions."

"Those instructions I have," replied the lieutenant, "and I've got to follow them out—more's the pity," he added between his teeth, while turning to his troopers to give the decisive command. At this moment down from the bluff and over the wooden bridge came clattering a crowd of armed farmers, the younger ones whirling their rifles or revolvers as they rode. Foremost among them were Morris and Seth Stevens, and between these two young Jake Conklin on Jack. As they reached the corner of the fence the crowd pulled up and Morris cried out:

"Elder, we're on time, I reckon." Addressing the lieutenant he added violently: "We don't pay United States soldiers to pull down our fences and destroy our crops. That's got to stop right here, and right now!"

"My orders are imperative," the officer declared, "and if you resist you must take the consequences." But while he spoke the hopelessness of his position became clear to him, for reinforcements of farmers were still pouring over the bridge, and already the soldiers were outnumbered two to one. Just as

Seth Stevens began with "Damn the consequences," the Elder interrupted him:

"Young man," he said to the lieutenant, "you'd better go back to Wichita. I guess General Custer didn't send you to fight the hull township." Turning to Stevens, he added, "Thar ain't no need fer any cussin'." Amid complete silence he uncocked his shot-gun, climbed over the fence, and went on in the same voice:

"Jake, take that horse to the stable an' wipe him dry. Tell your mother I'm coming right up to eat."

Without another word he moved off homewards. His intervention had put an end to the difficulty. Even the lieutenant understood that there was nothing more to be done for the moment. Five minutes later the troopers recrossed the bridge. Morris and a few of the older men held a brief consultation. It was agreed that they should be on the same spot at six o'clock on the morrow, and some of the younger spirits volunteered to act as scouts in the direction of Wichita and keep the others informed of what took place in that quarter.

When Bancroft reached the house with Morris—neither Stevens nor any of the others felt inclined to trespass on the Elder's hospitality without an express invitation—he found dinner waiting. Loo had not returned; had, indeed, arranged, as Morris informed them, to spend the day with his wife; but Jake was present and irrepressible; he wanted to tell all he had done to secure the victory. But he had scarcely commenced when his father shut him up by bidding him eat, for he'd have to go right back to school.

There was no feeling of triumph in the Elder. He scarcely spoke, and when Morris described the protective measures that had been adopted, he merely nodded. In fact, one would have inferred from his manner that he had had nothing whatever to do with the contest, and took no interest in it. The only thing that appeared to trouble him was Loo's absence and the fear lest she should have been "fussed;" but when Morris declared that neither his wife nor Loo knew what was going on, and Bancroft announced his intention of driving over to fetch her, he seemed to be satisfied.

"Jack, I reckon, has had enough," he said to his boarder. "You'd better take the white mare; she's quiet."

On their way home in the buggy, Bancroft told Loo how her father had defied the United States troops, and with what unconcern he had taken his victory:

"I think he's a great man, a hero. And if he had lived in another time, or in another country, poets would have sung his courage."

"Really," she observed. Her tone was anything but enthusiastic, though hope stirred in her at his unusual warmth. "Perhaps he cares for me after all," she thought.

"What are you thinking about, Loo?" he asked, surprised at her silence.

"I was just wonderin'," she answered, casting off her fit of momentary abstraction, "how father made you like him. It appears as if I couldn't, George," and she turned towards him while she spoke her wistful eyes seeking to read his face.

There was a suggestion of tears in her voice, and her manner showed a submission and humility which touched Bancroft deeply. All his good impulses had been called into active life by his admiration of the Elder. He put his disengaged arm round her and drew her to him as he replied:

"Kiss me, Loo dear, and let us try to get on better together in future. There's no reason why we shouldn't," he added, trying to convince himself. The girl's vain and facile temperament required but little encouragement to abandon itself in utter confidence. In her heart of hearts she was sure that every man must admire her, and as her companion's manner and words gave her hope, she chattered away in the highest spirits till the homestead was reached. Her good-humour and self-satisfaction made the evening pass merrily. Everything she said or did delighted the Elder, Bancroft saw that clearly now. Whether she laughed or talked, teased Jake, or mimicked the matronly airs of Mrs. Morris, her father's eyes followed her with manifest pleasure and admiration. On rising to go to bed the Elder said simply:

"It has been a good day—a good day," he repeated impressively, while he held his daughter in his arms and kissed her.

The next morning Bancroft was early afoot. Shortly after sunrise he went down to the famous cornfield and found a couple of youths on watch. They had been there for more than an hour, they said, and Seth Stevens and Richards had gone scouting towards Wichita. "Conklin's corner's all right," was the phrase which sent the schoolmaster

to breakfast with a light heart. When the meal was over he returned to the centre of excitement. The Elder had gone about his work; Mrs. Conklin seemed as helplessly indifferent as usual; Loo was complacently careless; but Bancroft, having had time for reflection, felt sure that all this was Western presumption; General Custer could not accept defeat so easily. At the "corner" he found a couple of hundred youths and men assembled. They were all armed, but the general opinion was that Custer would do nothing. One old farmer summed up the situation in the phrase, "Thar ain't nothin' for him to do, but set still."

About eight o'clock, however, Richards raced up, with his horse in a lather, and announced that Custer, with three hundred men, had started from Wichita before six.

"He'll be hyar in half an hour," he concluded.

Hurried counsel was taken; fifty men sought cover behind the stooks of corn, the rest lined the skirting woods. When all was in order, Bancroft was deputed to go and fetch the Elder, whom he eventually discovered at the wood pile, sawing and splitting logs for firewood.

"Make haste, Elder," he cried, "Morris has sent me for you, and there's no time to be lost. Custer, with three hundred men, left Wichita at six o'clock this morning, and they'll be here very soon."

The Elder paused unwillingly, and resting on his axe asked: "Is Morris alone?"

"No!" replied Bancroft, amazed to think the Elder could have forgotten the arrangements he had heard described the evening before. "There are two

hundred men down there in the corner and in the woods," and he rapidly sketched the position.

"It's all right then I guess," the Elder decided. "They'll get along without me. Tell Morris I'm at my chores." Beginning his work again, he added, "I've somethin' to *do* hyar."

From the old man's manner Bancroft was convinced that solicitation would be a waste of time. He returned to the corner, where he found Morris standing inside the fence.

"I guessed so," was Morris's comment upon the Elder's attitude; "we'll hev to do without him, I reckon. You and me'll stay hyar in the open; we don't want to shoot ef we kin avoid it; there ain't no reason to as I kin see."

Ten minutes afterwards the cavalry crossed the bridge two deep, and wound snake-like towards the corner. With the first files came General Custer, accompanied by half-a-dozen officers, among whom Bancroft recognized the young lieutenant. Singling Morris out, the General rode up to the fence and addressed him with formal politeness:

"Mr. Conklin?"

"No," replied Morris, "but I'm hyar fer him, I guess—an' about two hundred more ef I'm not enough," he added drily, waving his hand towards the woods.

With a half-turn in his saddle and a glance at the line of trees on his flank, General Custer took in the situation. Clearly there was nothing to do but to retreat, with some show of dignity.

"Where shall I find Mr. Conklin? I wish to speak to him."

"I'll guide you," was Morris's answer, "ef you'll come alone; he mightn't fancy so many visitors to onc't."

As Morris and Bancroft climbed over the fence and led the way towards the homestead, some of the armed farmers strolled from behind the stooks into the open, and others showed themselves carelessly among the trees on the bank of the creek. When the Elder was informed that General Custer was at the front door, he laid down his axe, and in his shirt-sleeves went to meet him.

"Mr. Conklin, I believe?"

"That's my name, General."

"You've resisted United States troops with arms, and now, it seems, you've got up a rebellion."

"I guess not, General; I guess not. I was Union all through the war; I came hyar as an Abolitionist. I only want to keep my fences up as long as they'll stand, an' cut my corn in peace."

"Well," General Custer resumed, after a pause, "I must send to Washington for instructions and state the facts as I know them, but if the Federal authorities tell me to carry out the law, as I've no doubt they will, I shall be compelled to do so, and resistance on your part can only cause useless bloodshed."

"That's so," was the quiet reply; but what the phrase meant was not very clear save to Bancroft, who understood that the Elder was unable or unwilling to discuss a mere hypothesis.

With a curt motion of his hand to his cap General Custer cantered off to rejoin his men, who shortly afterwards filed again across the bridge on their way back to camp.

When the coast was clear of soldiers some of the older settlers went up to Conklin's to take counsel together. It was agreed to collect from all the farmers interested two dollars a head for law expenses, and to send at once for Lawyer Barkman of Wichita, in order to have his opinion on the case. Morris offered to bring Barkman next day about noon to Conklin's, and this proposal was accepted. If any other place had been fixed upon, it would have been manifestly impossible to secure the Elder's presence, for his refusal again to leave the wood pile had converted his back-stoop into the council-chamber. Without more ado the insurgents dispersed, every man to his house.

On returning home to dinner next day Bancroft noticed a fine buggy drawn up outside the stable, and a negro busily engaged in grooming two strange horses. When he entered the parlour he was not surprised to find that Morris had already arrived with the lawyer. Barkman was about forty years of age; above the medium height and very stout, but active. His face was heavy; its outlines obscured by fat; the nose, however, was thin and cocked inquisitively, and the eyes, though small, were restless and intelligent. He was over-dressed; his black frock-coat was brand-new; the diamond stud which shone in the centre of a vast expanse of shirt-front, was nearly the size of a five-cent piece —his appearance filled Bancroft with contempt. Nevertheless he seemed to know his business. As soon as he had heard the story he told them that an action against the Elder would lie in the Federal Courts, and that the damages would certainly be

heavy. Still, something might be done; the act of rebellion, he thought, would be difficult to prove; in fine, they must wait on events.

At this moment Mrs. Conklin accompanied by Loo came in to announce that dinner was ready. It was manifest that the girl's beauty made a deep impression on Barkman. Before seeing her he had professed to regard the position as hopeless, or nearly so; now he was ready to reconsider his first opinion, or rather to modify it. His quick intelligence appeared to have grown keener as he suddenly changed his line of argument, and began to set forth the importance of getting the case fully and fairly discussed in Washington.

"I must get clear affidavits from all the settlers," he said, "and then, I guess, we'll show the authorities in Washington that this isn't a question in which they should interfere. But if I save you," he went on, with a laugh intended to simulate frank good-nature, "I s'pose I may reckon on your votes when I run for Congress."

It was understood at once that he had pitched upon the best possible method of defence. Morris seemed to speak for all when he said:

"Ef you'll take the trouble now, I guess we'll ensure your election."

"Never mind the election, that was only a jest," replied the lawyer good-humouredly; "and the trouble's not worth talkin' about. If Miss Conklin," and here he turned respectfully towards her, "would take a seat in my buggy and show me the chief settlers' houses, I reckon I could fix up the case in three or four days."

The eyes of all were directed upon Loo. Was it Bancroft's jealousy that made him smile contemptuously as he, too, glanced at her? If so, the disdain was ill-timed. Flushing slightly, she answered, "I guess I'll be pleased to do what I can," and she met the schoolmaster's eyes defiantly as she spoke.

WITH the advent of Barkman upon the scene a succession of new experiences began for Bancroft. He was still determined not to be seduced into making Loo his wife. But now the jealousy that is born of desire and vanity tormented him, and the mere thought that Barkman might marry and live with her irritated him intensely. She was worthy of better things than marriage with such a man. She was vain, no doubt, and lacking in the finer sensibilities, the tremulous moral instincts which are the crown and glory of womanhood; but it was not her fault that her education had been faulty, her associates coarse—and after all she was very beautiful.

On returning home one afternoon he saw Barkman walking with her in the peach orchard. As they turned round the girl called to him, and came at once to meet him; but his jealousy would not be appeased. Her flower-like face, framed, so to speak, by the autumn foliage, only increased his anger. He could not bear to *see* her flirting. Were she out of his sight, he felt for the first time, he would not care what she did.

"You were goin' in without speakin'," she said reproachingly.

"You have a man with you whose trade is talk. I'm not needed," was his curt reply.

Half-incensed, half-gratified by his passionate exclamation, she drew back, while Barkman, advancing, said:

"Good day, Mr. Bancroft, good day. I was just tryin' to persuade Miss Conklin to come for another drive this evenin' in order to get this business of ours settled as soon as possible."

"Another drive." Bancroft repeated the words to himself, and then steadying his voice answered coolly: "You'll have no difficulty, lawyer. I was just telling Miss Conklin that you talked splendidly—the result of constant practice, I presume."

"That's it, sir," replied the lawyer seriously; "it's chiefly a matter of practice added to gift—natural gift," but here Barkman's conceit died out as he caught an uneasy, impatient movement of Miss Conklin, and he went on quietly with the knowledge of life and the adaptability gained by long experience: "But anyway, I'm glad you agree with me, for Miss Conklin may take your advice after rejectin' mine."

Bancroft saw the trap, but could not restrain himself. With a contemptuous smile he said:

"I'm sure no advice of mine is needed; Miss Conklin has already made up her mind to gratify you. She likes to show the country to strangers," he added bitterly.

The girl flushed at the sarcasm, but her spirit was not subdued.

"Wall, Mr. Barkman," she retorted, with a smiling glance at the lawyer, "I guess I must give in; if

Mr. Bancroft thinks I ought ter, there's no more to be said. I'm willin'."

An evening or two later, Barkman having gone into Wichita, Bancroft asked Loo to go out with him upon the stoop. For several minutes he stood in silence admiring the moonlit landscape; then he spoke as if to himself:

"Not a cloud in the purple depths, no breath of air, no sound nor stir of life—peace absolute that mocks at man's cares and restlessness. Look, Loo, how the ivory light bathes the prairie and shimmers on the sea of corn, and makes of the little creek a ribband of silver. . . .

"Yet you seem to prefer a great diamond gleaming in a white shirt-front, and a coarse, common face, and vulgar talk.

"You," and he turned to her, "whose beauty is like the beauty of nature itself, perfect and ineffable. When I think of you and that coarse brute together, I shall always remember this moonlight and the hateful zig-zagging snake-fence there that disfigures and defiles its beauty."

The girl looked up at him, only half understanding his rhapsody, but glowing with the hope called to life by his extravagant praise of her. "Why, George," she said shyly, because wholly won, "I don't think no more of Lawyer Barkman than the moon thinks of the fence—an' I guess that's not much," she added, with a little laugh of complete content.

The common phrases of uneducated speech and the vulgar accent of what he thought her attempt at smart rejoinder offended him. Misunderstanding

her literalness of mind, he moved away, and shortly afterwards re-entered the house.

Of course Loo was dissatisfied with such incidents as these. When she saw Bancroft trying to draw Barkman out and throw contempt upon him, she never dreamed of objecting. But when he attacked her, she flew to her weapons. What had she done, what was she doing, to deserve his sneers? She only wished him to love her, and she felt indignantly that every time she teased him by going with Barkman, he was merciless, and whenever she abandoned herself to him, he drew back. She couldn't bear that; it was cruel of him. She loved him, yes; no one, she knew, would ever make him so good a wife as she would. No one ever could. Why, there was nothin' she wouldn't do for him willingly. She'd see after his comforts an' everythin'. She'd tidy all his papers an' fix up his things. And if he ever got ill, she'd jest wait on him day and night—so she would. She'd be the best wife to him that ever was.

Oh, why couldn't he be good to her always? That was all she wanted, to feel he loved her; then she'd show him how she loved him. He'd be happy, as happy as the day was long. How foolish men were! they saw nothin' that was under their noses.

"P'r'aps he does love me," she said to herself; "he talked the other evenin' beautiful; I guess he don't talk like that to everyone, and yet he won't give in to me an' jest be content—once for all. It's their pride makes 'em like that; their silly, stupid pride. Nothin' else. Men air foolish things. I've

no pride at all when I think of him, except I know that no one else could make him as happy as I could. Oh my!" and she sighed with a sense of the mysterious unnecessary suffering in life.

"An' he goes on bein' mad with Lawyer Barkman. Fancy, that fat old man. He warn't jealous of Seth Stevens or the officer, no; but of him. Why, it's silly. Barkman don't count anyway. He talks well, yes, an' he's always pleasant, always; but he's jest not in it. Men air foolish anyway." She was beginning to acknowledge that all her efforts to gain her end might prove unsuccessful.

Barkman, with his varied experience and the cooler blood of forty, saw more of the game than either Bancroft or Loo. He had learnt that compliments and attention count for much with women, and having studied Miss Conklin he was sure that persistent flattery would go a long way towards winning her. "I've gained harder cases by studying the jury," he thought, "and I'll get her because I know her. That schoolmaster irritates her; I won't. He says unpleasant things to her; I'll say pleasant things and she'll turn to me. She likes to be admired; I guess that means dresses and diamonds. Well, she shall have them, have all she wants. . . . . The mother ain't a factor, that's plain, and the father's sittin' on the fence; he'll just do anythin' for the girl, and if he ain't well off—what does that matter? I don't want money;" and his chest expanded with a proud sense of disinterestedness.

"Why does the schoolmaster run after her? what would he do with such a woman? He couldn't even keep her properly if he got her. It's a duty to save

the girl from throwin' herself away on a young, untried man like that." He felt again that his virtue ought to help him to succeed.

"What a handsome figure she has! Her arms are perfect, firm as marble; and her neck—round, too, and not a line on it, and how she walks! She's the woman I want—so lovely I'll always be proud of her. What a wife she'll make! My first wife was pretty, but not to be compared to her. Who'd ever have dreamt of finding such a beauty in this place? How lucky I am after all. Yes, lucky because I know just what I want, and go for it right from the start. That's all. That's what luck means.

"Women are won little by little," he concluded. "Whoever knows them and humours them right along, flattering their weak points, is sure to succeed some time or other. And I can wait."

He got his opportunity by waiting. As Loo took her seat in the buggy one afternoon he saw that she was nervous and irritable. "The schoolmaster's been goin' for her—the derned fool," he said to himself, and at once began to soothe her. The task was not an easy one. She was cold to him at first and even spiteful; she laughed at what he said and promised, and made fun of his pretensions. His kindly temper stood him in good stead. He was quietly persistent; with the emollient of good-nature he wooed her in his own fashion, and before they reached the first settler's house he had half won her to kindliness. Here he made his victory complete. At every question he appealed to her deferentially for counsel and decision; he reckoned Miss Conklin would know, he relied on her for the facts, and when she spoke he

guessed that just settled the matter; her opinion was good enough for him, and so forth.

Wounded to the soul by Bancroft's persistent, undeserved contempt, the girl felt that now at last she had met someone who appreciated her, and she gave herself up to the charm of dexterous flattery.

From her expression and manner while they drove homewards, Barkman believed that the game was his own. He went on talking to her with the reverence which he had already found to be so effective. There was no one like her. What a lawyer she'd have made! How she got round the wife and induced the husband to sign the petition—'twas wonderful! He had never imagined a woman could be so tactful and winning. He had never met a man who was her equal in persuading people.

The girl drank in the praise as a dry land drinks the rain. He meant it all; that was clear. He had shown it in his words and acts—there, before the Croftons. She had always believed she could do such things; she didn't care much about books, and couldn't talk fine about moonlight, but the men an' women she knew, she understood. She was sure of that. But still, 'twas pleasant to hear it. He must love her or he could never appreciate her as he did. She reckoned he was very clever; the best lawyer in the State. Everyone knew that. And he had said no man was equal to her. Oh, if only the other, if only George had told her so; but he was too much wrapped up in himself, and, after all what was he anyway? Yet, if he had——

At this point of her musings the lawyer, seeing the flushed cheeks and softened glance, believed his

moment had come, and resolved to use it. His passion made him forget that it was possible to go too fast.

"Miss Conklin," he began seriously, "if you'd join with me there's nothin' we two couldn't do, nothin'! They call me the first lawyer in the State, and I guess I'll get to Washington soon; but with you to help me I'd be there before this year's out. As the wife of a Member of Congress, you would show them all the way. I'm rich already; that is, I can do whatever you want, and it's a shame for such genius as yours, and such talent, to be hidden here among people who don't know how to value you properly. In New York or in Washington you'd shine; become a social power," and as the words "New York" caused the girl to look at him with eager attention, he added, overcome by the foretaste of approaching triumph: "Miss Loo, I love you; you've seen that, for you notice everythin'. I know I'm not young, but I can be kinder and more faithful than any young man, and," here he slipped his arm round her waist, "I guess all women want to be loved, don't they? Will you let me love you, Loo, as my wife?"

The girl shrank away from him nervously. Perhaps the fact of being in a buggy recalled her rides with George; or the caress brought home to her the difference between the two men. However that may be, when she answered, it was with full self-possession:

"I guess what you say's about right, and I like you. But I don't want to marry—anyway not yet. Of course I'd like to help you, and I'd like to live

in New York; but—I can't make up my mind all at once. You must wait. If you really care for me, that can't be hard."

"Yes, it's hard," Barkman replied, "very hard to feel uncertain of winning the only woman I can ever love. But I don't want to press you," he added, after a pause, "I rely on you; you know best, and I'll do just what you wish."

"Well, then," she resumed, mollified by his humility, "you'll go back to Wichita this evenin', as you said you would, and when you return, the day after to-morrow, I'll tell you Yes or No. Will that do?" and she smiled up in his face.

"Yes, that's more than I had a right to expect," he acknowledged. "Hope from you is better than certainty from any other woman." In this mood they reached the homestead. Loo alighted at the gate; she wouldn't allow Barkman even to get down; he was to go right off at once, but when he returned she'd meet him. With a grave respectful bow he lifted his hat, and drove away. On the whole, he had reason to be proud of his diplomacy; reason, too, for saying to himself that at last he had got on "the inside track." Still, all the factors in the problem were not seen even by his keen eyes.

The next morning, Loo began to reflect upon what she should do. It did not occur to her that she had somewhat compromised herself with the lawyer by giving him leave and, in fact, encouragement to expect a favourable answer. She was so used to looking at all affairs from the point of view of her own self-interest and satisfaction, that such an idea did not even enter her head. She simply

wanted to decide on what was best for herself. She considered the matter as it seemed to her, from all sides, without arriving at any decision. Barkman was kind, and good to her; but she didn't care for him, and she loved George still. Oh, why wasn't he like the other, always sympathetic and admiring? She sat and thought. In the depths of her nature she felt that she couldn't give George up, couldn't make up her mind to lose him; and why should she, since they loved each other? What could she do?

Of a sudden she paused. She remembered how, more than a year before, she had been invited to Eureka for a ball. She had stayed with her friend Miss Jennie Blood; by whose advice and with whose help she had worn for the first time a low-necked dress. She had been uncomfortable in it at first, very uncomfortable, but the men liked it, all of them. She had seen their admiration in their eyes; as Jennie had said, it fetched them. If only George could see her in a low-necked dress—she flushed as she thought of it—perhaps he'd admire her, and then she'd be quite happy. But there were never any balls or parties in this dead-and-alive township! How could she manage it?

The solution came to her with a shock of half-frightened excitement. It was warm still, very warm, in the middle of the day; why shouldn't she dress as for a dance, somethin' like it anyway, and go into George's room to put it straight just before he came home from school? Her heart beat quickly as she reflected. After all, what harm was there in it? She recollected hearing that in the South all

the girls wore low dresses in summer, and she loved George, and she was sure he loved her. Anyone would do it, and no one would know. She resolved to try on the dress, just to see how it suited her. There was no harm in that. She took off her thin cotton gown quickly, and put on the ball-dress. But when she had dragged the chest of drawers before the window and had propped up the little glass on it to have a good look at herself, she grew hot. She couldn't wear that, not in daylight; it looked, oh, it looked—and she blushed crimson. Besides, the tulle was all frayed and faded. No, she couldn't wear it! Oh!—and her eyes filled with tears of envy and vexation. If only she were rich, like lots of other girls, she could have all sorts of dresses. 'Twas unfair, so it was. She became desperate with disappointment, and set her wits to work again. She had plenty of time still. George wouldn't be back before twelve. She must choose a dress he had never seen; then he wouldn't know but what she often wore it so. Nervously, hurriedly, she selected a cotton frock, and before the tiny glass pinned and arranged it over her shoulders and bust, higher than the ball-dress, but still, lower than she had ever worn in the daytime. She fashioned the garment with an instinctive sense of form that a Parisian *couturière* might have envied, and went to work. Her nimble fingers soon cut and sewed it to the style she had intended, and then she tried it on. As she looked at herself in the mirror the vision of her loveliness surprised and charmed her. She had drawn a blue ribbon that she happened to possess, round the arms of the dress and round the bodice of it, and when she

saw how this little thread of colour set off the full outlines of her bust and the white roundness of her arms, she could have kissed her image in the glass. She was lovely, prettier than any girl in the section. George would see that; he loved beautiful things. Hadn't he talked of the scenery for half an hour? He'd be pleased.

She thought again seriously whether her looks could not be improved. After rummaging a little while in vain, she went downstairs and borrowed a light woollen shawl from her mother on the pretext that she liked the feel of it. Hastening up to her own room, she put it over her shoulders, and practised a long time before the dim glass just to see how best she could throw it back or draw it round her at will.

At last, with a sigh of content, she felt herself fully equipped for the struggle; she was looking her best. If George didn't care for her so—and she viewed herself again approvingly from all sides—why, she couldn't help it. She had done all she could, but if he did, and he must—why, then, he'd tell her, and they'd be happy. At the bottom of her heart she felt afraid. George was strange; not a bit like other men. He might be cold, and at the thought she felt inclined to cry out. Pride, however, came to her aid. If he didn't like her, it would be his fault. She had just done her best, and that she reckoned, with a flush of pardonable conceit, was good enough for any *man*.

An hour later Bancroft went up to his room. As he opened the door Loo turned towards him from the centre-table with a low cry of surprise,

drawing at the same time the ends of the fleecy woollen wrap tight across her breast.

"Oh, George, how you scared me! I was jest fixin' up your things." And the girl crimsoned, while her eyes sought to read his face.

"Thank you," he rejoined carelessly, and then, held by something of expectation in her manner, he looked at her intently, and added: "Why, Loo, how well you look! I like that dress; it suits you." And he stepped towards her.

She held out both hands as if to meet his, but by the gesture the woollen scarf was thrown back, and her form unveiled. Once again her mere beauty stung the young man to desire, but something of a conscious look in her face gave him thought, and, scrutinizing her coldly, he said:

"I suppose that dress was put on for Mr. Barkman's benefit."

"Oh, George!" she cried, in utter dismay, "he hain't been here to-day." And then, as the hard expression did not leave his face, she added hurriedly: "I put it on for you, George. Do believe me."

Still his face did not alter. Suddenly she understood that she had betrayed her secret. She burst into bitter tears.

He took her in his arms and spoke perfunctory words of consolation; her body yielded to his touch, and in a few moments he was soothing her in earnest. Her grief was uncontrollable. "I've jest done everythin', everythin', and it's all no use," she sobbed aloud. When he found that he could not check the tears, he grew irritated; he divined her little stratagem, and his lip curled. How unmaidenly!

In a flash, she stood before him, her shallow, childish vanity unmasked. The pity of it did not strike him; he was too young for that; he felt only contempt for her, and at once drew his arms away. With a long, choking sob she moved to the door and disappeared. She went blindly along the passage to her room, and, flinging herself on the bed, cried as if her heart would break. Then followed a period of utter abject misery. She had lost everythin'; George didn't care for her; she'd have to live all her life without him, and again slow, scalding tears fell.

The thought of going downstairs to supper and meeting him was intolerable. The sense of what she had confessed to him swept over her in a hot flood of shame. No, she couldn't go down; she couldn't face his eyes again. She'd sit right there, and her mother'd come up, and she'd tell her she had a headache. To meet him was impossible; she just hated him. He was hard and cruel; she'd never see him again; he had degraded her. The whole place became unbearable as she relived the past; she must get away from him, from it all, at any cost, as soon as she could. They'd be sorry when she was gone. And she cried again a little, but these tears relieved her, did her good.

She tried to look at the whole position steadily. Barkman would take her away to New York. Marry him?—she didn't want to, but she wouldn't make up her mind now; she'd go away with him if he'd be a real friend to her. Only he mustn't put his arm round her again; she didn't like him to do that. If he wished to be a friend to her, she'd let

him; if not, she'd go by herself. He must understand that. Once in New York, she'd meet kind people, live as she wanted to live, and never think of this horrid time.

She was all alone; no one in the world to talk to about her trouble—no one. No one cared for her. Her mother loved Jake best; and besides, if she told her anythin', she'd only set down an' cry. She'd write and say she was comfortable; and her father?—he'd get over it. He was kind always, but he never felt much anyway—leastwise, he never showed anythin'. When they got her letter 'twould be all right. That was what she'd do—and so, with her little hands clenched and feverish face, she sat and thought, letting her imagination work.

A few mornings later Bancroft came down early. He had slept badly, had been nervous and disturbed by jealous forebodings, and had not won easily to self-control. He had only been in the sitting-room a minute or two when the Elder entered, and stopping in front of him asked sharply:

"Hev you seen Loo yet?"

"No. Is she down?"

"I reckoned you'd know ef she had made out anythin' partikler to do to-day."

"No," he repeated seriously, the Elder's manner impressing him. "No! she told me nothing, but perhaps she hasn't got up yet."

"She ain't in her room."

"What do you mean?"

"You didn't hear buggy-wheels last night—along towards two o'clock?"

"No, but—you don't mean to say? Lawyer Barkman!" And Bancroft started up with horror in his look.

The Elder stared at him, with rigid face and wild eyes, but as he gradually took in the sincerity of the young man's excitement, he turned, and left the room.

To his bedroom he went, and there, after closing the door, fell on his knees. For a long time no word came; with clasped hands and bowed head the old man knelt in silence. Sobs shook his frame, but no tears fell. At length broken sentences dropped heavily from his half-conscious lips:

"Lord, Lord! 'Tain't right to punish her. She knowed nothin'. She's so young. I did wrong, but I kain't bear her to be punished.

"P'r'aps You've laid this on me jes' to show I'm foolish and weak. That's so, O Lord! I'm in the hollow of Your hand. But You'll save her, O Lord! for Jesus' sake.

"I'm all broke up. I kain't pray. I'm skeered. Lord Christ, help her; stan' by her; be with her. O Lord, forgive!"

JUNE AND JULY, 1891.

THE SHERIFF

AND

HIS PARTNER.

THE SHERIFF
AND
HIS PARTNER.

ONE afternoon in July, 1869, I was seated at my desk in Locock's law-office in the town of Kiota, Kansas. I had landed in New York from Liverpool nearly a year before, and had drifted westwards seeking in vain for some steady employment. Lawyer Locock, however, had promised to let me study law with him, and to give me a few dollars a month besides, for my services as a clerk. I was fairly satisfied with the prospect, and the little town interested me. An outpost of civilization, it was situated on the border of the great plains, which were still looked upon as the natural possession of the nomadic Indian tribes. It owed its importance to the fact that it lay on the cattle-trail which led from the prairies of Texas through this no man's land to the railway system, and that it was the first place where the cowboys coming north could find a bed to sleep in, a bar to drink at, and a table to gamble on. For some years they had made of Kiota a hell upon earth. But gradually the land in the neighbourhood was taken up by farmers, emigrants chiefly from New England, who were determined to put an end to the reign of violence. A man named Johnson was their leader in establishing order and tranquillity. Elected, almost

as soon as he came to the town, to the dangerous post of City Marshal, he organized a vigilance committee of the younger and more daring settlers, backed by whom he resolutely suppressed the drunken rioting of the cowboys. After the ruffians had been taught to behave themselves, Johnson was made Sheriff of the County, a post which gave him a house and permanent position. Though married now, and apparently "settled down," the Sheriff was a sort of hero in Kiota. I had listened to many tales about him, showing desperate determination veined with a sense of humour, and I often regretted that I had reached the place too late to see him in action. I had little or nothing to do in the office. The tedium of the long days was almost unbroken, and Stephen's "Commentaries" had become as monotonous and unattractive as the bare uncarpeted floor. The heat was tropical, and I was dozing when a knock startled me. A negro boy slouched in with a bundle of newspapers:

"This yer is Jedge Locock's, I guess?"

"I guess so," was my answer as I lazily opened the third or fourth number of the "Kiota Weekly Tribune." Glancing over the sheet my eye caught the following paragraph:

"HIGHWAY ROBBERY WITH VIOLENCE.

JUDGE SHANNON STOPPED.

THE OUTLAW ESCAPES.

HE KNOWS SHERIFF JOHNSON.

"Information has just reached us of an outrage perpetrated on the person of one of our most

respected fellow-citizens. The crime was committed in daylight, on the public highway within four miles of this city; a crime, therefore, without parallel in this vicinity for the last two years. Fortunately our County and State authorities can be fully trusted, and we have no sort of doubt that they can command, if necessary, the succour and aid of each and every citizen of this locality in order to bring the offending miscreant to justice.

"We now place the plain recital of this outrage before our readers.

"Yesterday afternoon, as Ex-Judge Shannon was riding from his law-office in Kiota towards his home on Sumach Bluff, he was stopped about four miles from this town by a man who drew a revolver on him, telling him at the same time to pull up. The Judge, being completely unarmed and unprepared, obeyed, and was told to get down from the buckboard, which he did. He was then ordered to put his watch and whatever money he had, in the road, and to retreat three paces.

"The robber pocketed the watch and money, and told him he might tell Sheriff Johnson that Tom Williams had 'gone through him,' and that he (Williams) could be found at the saloon in Osawotamie at any time. The Judge now hoped for release, but Tom Williams (if that be the robber's real name) seemed to get an afterthought, which he at once proceeded to carry into effect. Drawing a knife he cut the traces, and took out of the shafts the Judge's famous trotting mare, Lizzie D., which he mounted with the remark:

"'Sheriff Johnson, I reckon, would come after

the money any way, but the hoss'll fetch him—sure pop.'

"These words have just been given to us by Judge Shannon himself, who tells us also that the outrage took place on the North Section Line, bounding Bray's farm.

"After this speech the highway robber Williams rode towards the township of Osawotamie, while Judge Shannon, after drawing the buckboard to the edge of the track, was compelled to proceed homewards on foot.

"The outrage, as we have said, took place late last evening, and Judge Shannon, we understand, did not trouble to inform the County authorities of the circumstance till to-day at noon, after leaving our office. What the motive of the crime may have been we do not worry ourselves to inquire; a crime, an outrage upon justice and order, has been committed; that is all we care to know. If anything fresh happens in this connection we propose to issue a second edition of this paper. Our fellow-citizens may rely upon our energy and watchfulness to keep them posted.

"Just before going to press we learn that Sheriff Johnson was out of town attending to business when Judge Shannon called; but Sub-Sheriff Jarvis informs us that he expects the Sheriff back shortly. It is necessary to add, by way of explanation, that Mr. Jarvis cannot leave the jail unguarded, even for a few hours."

As may be imagined this item of news awakened my keenest interest. It fitted in with some things

that I knew already, and I was curious to learn more. I felt that this was the first act in a drama. Vaguely I remembered someone telling in disconnected phrases why the Sheriff had left Missouri, and come to Kansas:

"'Twas after a quor'll with a pardner of his, named Williams, who kicked out."

Bit by bit the story, to which I had not given much attention when I heard it, so casually, carelessly was it told, recurred to my memory.

"They say as how Williams cut up rough with Johnson, and drawed a knife on him, which Johnson gripped with his left while he pulled trigger.—Williams, I heerd, was in the wrong; I hain't perhaps got the right end of it; anyhow, you might hev noticed the Sheriff hes lost the little finger off his left hand.—Johnson, they say, got right up and lit out from Pleasant Hill. Perhaps the folk in Mizzoori kinder liked Williams the best of the two; I don't know. Anyway, Sheriff Johnson's a square man; his record here proves it. An' real grit, you bet your life."

The narrative had made but a slight impression on me at the time; I didn't know the persons concerned, and had no reason to interest myself in their fortunes. In those early days, moreover, I was often homesick, and gave myself up readily to dreaming of English scenes and faces. Now the words and drawling intonation came back to me distinctly, and with them the question: Was the robber of Judge Shannon the same Williams who had once been the Sheriff's partner? My first impulse was to hurry into the street and try to find out; but it was the chief part

of my duty to stay in the office till six o'clock; besides, the Sheriff was "out of town," and perhaps would not be back that day. The hours dragged to an end at last; my supper was soon finished, and, as night drew down, I hastened along the wooden side-walk of Washington Street towards the Carvell House. This hotel was much too large for the needs of the little town; it contained some fifty bedrooms, of which perhaps half-a-dozen were permanently occupied by "high-toned" citizens, and a billiard-room of gigantic size, in which stood nine tables, as well as the famous bar. The space between the bar, which ran across one end of the room, and the billiard-tables, was the favourite nightly resort of the prominent politicians and gamblers. There, if anywhere, my questions would be answered.

On entering the billiard-room I was struck by the number of men who had come together. Usually only some twenty or thirty were present, half of whom sat smoking and chewing about the bar, while the rest watched a game of billiards or took a "life" in pool. This evening, however, the billiard-tables were covered with their slate-coloured "wraps," while at least a hundred and fifty men were gathered about the open space of glaring light near the bar. I hurried up the room, but as I approached the crowd my steps grew slower, and I became half ashamed of my eager, obtrusive curiosity and excitement. There was a kind of reproof in the lazy, cool glance which one man after another cast upon me, as I went by. Assuming an air of indecision I threaded my way through the chairs uptilted against the sides of the billiard-tables. I had drained a

glass of Bourbon whisky before I realized that these apparently careless men were stirred by some emotion which made them more cautious, more silent, more warily on their guard than usual. The gamblers and loafers, too, had taken "back seats" this evening, whilst hard-working men of the farmer class who did not frequent the expensive bar of the Carvell House were to be seen in front. It dawned upon me that the matter was serious, and was being taken seriously.

The silence was broken from time to time by some casual remark of no interest, drawled out in a monotone; every now and then a man invited the "crowd" to drink with him, and that was all. Yet the moral atmosphere was oppressive, and a vague feeling of discomfort grew upon me. These men "meant business."

Presently the door on my left opened—Sheriff Johnson came into the room.

"Good evenin'," he said; and a dozen voices, one after another, answered with "Good evenin'! good evenin', Sheriff!" A big frontiersman, however, a horse-dealer called Martin, who, I knew, had been on the old vigilance committee, walked from the centre of the group in front of the bar to the Sheriff, and held out his hand with:

"Shake, old man, and name the drink." The Sheriff took the proffered hand as if mechanically, and turned to the bar with "Whisky—straight."

Sheriff Johnson was a man of medium height, sturdily built. A broad forehead, and clear, grey-blue eyes that met everything fairly, testified in his favour. The nose, however, was fleshy and snub.

The mouth was not to be seen, nor its shape guessed at, so thickly did the brown moustache and beard grow; but the short beard seemed rather to exaggerate than conceal an extravagant outjutting of the lower jaw, that gave a peculiar expression of energy and determination to the face. His manner was unobtrusively quiet and deliberate.

It was an unusual occurrence for Johnson to come at night to the bar-lounge, which was beginning to fall into disrepute among the puritanical or middle-class section of the community. No one, however, seemed to pay any further attention to him or to remark the unusual cordiality of Martin's greeting. A quarter of an hour elapsed before anything of note occurred. Then, an elderly man whom I did not know, a farmer, by his dress, drew a copy of the "Kiota Tribune" from his pocket, and, stretching it towards Johnson, asked with a very marked Yankee twang:

"Sheriff, hev yeou read this 'Tribune?'"

Wheeling half round towards his questioner, the Sheriff replied:

"Yes, sir, I hev." A pause ensued, which was made significant to me by the fact that the bar-keeper suspended his hand and did not pour out the whisky he had just been asked to supply—a pause during which the two faced each other; it was broken by the farmer saying:

"Ez yeou wer out of town to-day, I allowed yeou might hev missed seein' it. I reckoned yeou'd come straight hyar before yeou went to hum."

"No, Crosskey," rejoined the Sheriff, with slow emphasis; "I went home first and came on hyar to see the boys."

"Wall," said Mr. Crosskey, as it seemed to me, half apologetically, "knowin' yeou I guessed yeou ought to hear the facks," then, with some suddenness, stretching out his hand, he added, "I hev' some way to go, an' my old woman 'ull be waitin' up fer me. Good night, Sheriff." The hands met while the Sheriff nodded: "Good night, Jim."

After a few greetings to right and left Mr. Crosskey left the bar. The crowd went on smoking, chewing, and drinking, but the sense of expectancy was still in the air, and the seriousness seemed, if anything, to have increased. Five or ten minutes may have passed when a man named Reid, who had run for the post of Sub-Sheriff the year before, and had failed to beat Johnson's nominee Jarvis, rose from his chair and asked abruptly:

"Sheriff, do you reckon to take any of us uns with you to-morrow?"

With an indefinable ring of sarcasm in his negligent tone, the Sheriff answered:

"I guess not, Mr. Reid."

Quickly Reid replied: "Then I reckon there's no use in us stayin';" and turning to a small knot of men among whom he had been sitting, he added, "Let's go, boys!"

The men got up and filed out after their leader without greeting the Sheriff in any way. With the departure of this group the shadow lifted. Those who still remained showed in manner a marked relief, and a moment or two later a man named Morris, whom I knew to be a gambler by profession, called out lightly:

"The crowd and you'll drink with me, Sheriff,

I hope? I want another glass, and then we won't keep you up any longer, for you ought to have a night's rest with to-morrow's work before you."

The Sheriff smiled assent. Everyone moved towards the bar, and conversation became general. Morris was the centre of the company, and he directed the talk jokingly to the account in the "Tribune," making fun, as it seemed to me, though I did not understand all his allusions, of the editor's timidity and pretentiousness. Morris interested and amused me even more than he amused the others; he talked like a man of some intelligence and reading, and listening to him I grew light-hearted and careless, perhaps more careless than usual, for my spirits had been ice-bound in the earlier gloom of the evening.

"'Fortunately our County and State authorities can be fully trusted,'" someone said.

"Mark that 'fortunately,' Sheriff," laughed Morris. "The editor was afraid to mention you alone, so he hitched the State on with you to lighten the load."

"Ay!" chimed in another of the gamblers, "and the 'aid and succour of each and every citizen,' eh, Sheriff, as if you'd take the whole town with you. I guess two or three'll be enough fer Williams."

This annoyed me. It appeared to me that Williams had addressed a personal challenge to the Sheriff, and I thought that Johnson should so consider it. Without waiting for the Sheriff to answer, whether in protest or acquiescence, I broke in:

"Two or three would be cowardly. One should

go, and one only." At once I felt rather than saw the Sheriff free himself from the group of men; the next moment he stood opposite to me.

"What was that?" he asked sharply, holding me with keen eye and out-thrust chin—repressed passion in voice and look.

The antagonism of his bearing excited and angered me not a little. I replied:

"I think it would be cowardly to take two or three against a single man. I said one should go, and I say so still."

"Do you?" he sneered. "I guess you'd go alone, wouldn't you? to bring Williams in?"

"If I were paid for it I should," was my heedless retort. As I spoke his face grew white with such passion that I instinctively put up my hands to defend myself, thinking he was about to attack me. The involuntary movement may have seemed boyish to him, for thought came into his eyes, and his face relaxed; moving away he said quietly:

"I'll set up drinks, boys."

They grouped themselves about him and drank, leaving me isolated. But this, now my blood was up, only added to the exasperation I felt at his contemptuous treatment, and accordingly I walked to the bar, and as the only unoccupied place was by Johnson's side I went there and said, speaking as coolly as I could:

"Though no one asks me to drink I guess I'll take some whisky, bar-keeper, if you please."

Johnson was standing with his back to me, but when I spoke he looked round, and I saw, or thought I saw, a sort of curiosity in his gaze. I

met his eye defiantly. He turned to the others and said, in his ordinary, slow way:

"Wall, good night, boys; I've got to go. It's gittin' late, an' I've had about as much as I want."

Whether he alluded to the drink or to my impertinence I was unable to divine. Without adding a word he left the room amid a chorus of "Good night, Sheriff!" With him went Martin and half-a-dozen more.

I thought I had come out of the matter fairly well until I spoke to some of the men standing near. They answered me, it is true, but in monosyllables, and evidently with unwillingness. In silence I finished my whisky, feeling that everyone was against me for some inexplicable cause. I resented this and stayed on. In a quarter of an hour the rest of the crowd had departed, with the exception of Morris and a few of the same kidney.

When I noticed that these gamblers, outlaws by public opinion, held away from me, I became indignant. Addressing myself to Morris, I asked:

"Can you tell me, sir, for you seem to be an educated man, what I have said or done to make you all shun me?"

"I guess so," he answered indifferently. "You took a hand in a game where you weren't wanted. And you tried to come in without ever having paid the *ante*, which is not allowed in any game—at least not in any game played about here."

The allusion seemed plain; I was not only a stranger but a foreigner; that must be my offence. With a "Good night, sir; good night, bar-keeper!" I left the room.

THE next morning I went as usual to the office. I may have been seated there about an hour—it was almost eight o'clock—when I heard a knock at the door.

"Come in," I said, swinging round in the American chair, to find myself face to face with Sheriff Johnson.

"Why, Sheriff, come in!" I exclaimed cheerfully, for I was relieved at seeing him, and so realized more clearly than ever that the unpleasantness of the previous evening had left in me a certain uneasiness. I was eager to show that the incident had no importance:

"Won't you take a seat? and you'll have a cigar? —these are not bad."

"No, thank you," he answered. "No, I guess I won't sit nor smoke jest now." After a pause, he added, "I see you're studyin'; p'r'aps you're busy to-day; I won't disturb you."

"You don't disturb me, Sheriff," I rejoined. "As for studying, there's not much in it. I seem to prefer dreaming."

"Wall," he said, letting his eyes range round the walls furnished with Law Reports bound in yellow calf, "I don't know, I guess there's a big lot of readin' to do before a man gets through with all those."

"Oh," I laughed, "the more I read the more clearly I see that law is only a sermon on various texts supplied by common sense."

"Wall," he went on slowly, coming a pace or two nearer and speaking with increased seriousness, "I reckon you've got all Locock's business to see after: his clients to talk to; letters to answer, and all that;

and when he's on the drunk I guess he don't do much. I won't worry you any more."

"You don't worry me," I replied. "I've not had a letter to answer in three days, and not a soul comes here to talk about business or anything else. I sit and dream, and wish I had something to do out there in the sunshine. Your work is better than reading words, words—nothing but words."

"You ain't busy; hain't got anything to do here that might keep you? Nothin'?"

"Not a thing. I'm sick of Blackstone and all Commentaries."

Suddenly I felt his hand on my shoulder (moving half round in the chair, I had for the moment turned sideways to him), and his voice was surprisingly hard and quick:

"Then I swear you in as a Deputy-Sheriff of the United States, and of this State of Kansas; and I charge you to bring in and deliver at the Sheriff's house, in this county of Elwood, Tom Williams, alive or dead, and—there's your fee, five dollars and twenty-five cents!" and he laid the money on the table.

Before the singular speech was half ended I had swung round facing him, with a fairly accurate understanding of what he meant. But the moment for decision had come with such sharp abruptness, that I still did not realize my position, though I replied defiantly as if accepting the charge:

"I've not got a weapon."

"The boys allowed you mightn't hev, and so I brought some along. You ken suit your hand." While speaking he produced two or three revolvers of different sizes, and laid them before me.

Dazed by the rapid progress of the plot, indignant, too, at the trick played upon me, I took up the nearest revolver and looked at it almost without seeing it. The Sheriff seemed to take my gaze for that of an expert's curiosity.

"It shoots true," he said meditatively, "plumb true; but it's too small to drop a man. I guess it wouldn't stop anyone with grit in him."

My anger would not allow me to consider his advice; I thrust the weapon in my pocket:

"I haven't got a buggy. How am I to get to Osawotamie?"

"Mine's hitched up outside. You ken hev it."

Rising to my feet I said: "Then we can go."

We had nearly reached the door of the office, when the Sheriff stopped, turned his back upon the door, and looking straight into my eyes said:

"Don't play foolish. You've no call to go. Ef you're busy, ef you've got letters to write, anythin' to do—I'll tell the boys you sed so, and that'll be all; that'll let you out."

Half-humorously, as it seemed to me, he added: "You're young and a tenderfoot. You'd better stick to what you've begun upon. That's the way to do somethin'.—I often think it's the work chooses us, and we've just got to get down and do it."

"I've told you I had nothing to do," I retorted angrily; "that's the truth. Perhaps" (sarcastically) "this work chooses me."

The Sheriff moved away from the door.

On reaching the street I stopped for a moment in utter wonder. At that hour in the morning Washington Street was usually deserted, but now it

seemed as if half the men in the town had taken up places round the entrance to Locock's office stairs. Some sat on barrels or boxes tipped up against the shop-front (the next store was kept by a German, who sold fruit and eatables); others stood about in groups or singly; a few were seated on the edge of the side-walk, with their feet in the dust of the street. Right before me and most conspicuous was the gigantic figure of Martin. He was sitting on a small barrel in front of the Sheriff's buggy.

"Good morning," I said in the air, but no one answered me. Mastering my irritation, I went forward to undo the hitching-strap, but Martin, divining my intention, rose and loosened the buckle. As I reached him, he spoke in a low whisper, keeping his back turned to me:

"Shoot off a joke quick. The boys'll let up on you then. It'll be all right. Say somethin', for God's sake!"

The rough sympathy did me good, relaxed the tightness round my heart; the resentment natural to one entrapped left me, and some of my self-confidence returned:

"I never felt less like joking in my life, Martin, and humour can't be produced to order."

He fastened up the hitching-strap, while I gathered the reins together and got into the buggy. When I was fairly seated he stepped to the side of the open vehicle, and, holding out his hand, said, "Good day," adding, as our hands clasped, "Wade in, young un; wade in."

"Good day, Martin. Good day, Sheriff. Good day, boys!"

To my surprise there came a chorus of answering "Good days!" as I drove up the street.

A few hundred yards I went, and then wheeled to the right past the post office, and so on for a quarter of a mile, till I reached the descent from the higher ground, on which the town was built, to the river. There, on my left, on the verge of the slope, stood the Sheriff's house in a lot by itself, with the long, low jail attached to it. Down the hill I went, and across the bridge and out into the open country. I drove rapidly for about five miles—more than half-way to Osawotamie—and then I pulled up, in order to think quietly and make up my mind.

I grasped the situation now in all its details. Courage was the one virtue which these men understood, the only one upon which they prided themselves. I, a stranger, a "tenderfoot," had questioned the courage of the boldest among them, and this mission was their answer to my insolence. The "boys" had planned the plot; Johnson was not to blame; clearly he wanted to let me out of it; he would have been satisfied there in the office if I had said that I was busy; he did not like to put his work on anyone else. And yet he must profit by my going. Were I killed, the whole country would rise against Williams; whereas if I shot Williams, the Sheriff would be relieved of the task. I wondered whether the fact of his having married made any difference to the Sheriff. Possibly—and yet it was not the Sheriff; it was the "boys" who had insisted on giving me the lesson. Public opinion was dead against me. "I had come into a game where I was not wanted, and I had never even paid

the *ante*—" that was Morris's phrase. Of course it was all clear now. I had never given any proof of courage, as most likely all the rest had at some time or other. That was the *ante* Morris meant. . .

My wilfulness had got me into the scrape; I had only myself to thank. Not alone the Sheriff but Martin would have saved me had I profited by the door of escape which he had tried to open for me. Neither of them wished to push the malice to the point of making me assume the Sheriff's risk, and Martin at least, and probably the Sheriff also, had taken my quick, half-unconscious words and acts as evidence of reckless determination. If I intended to live in the West I must go through with the matter.

But what nonsense it all was! Why should I chuck away my life in the attempt to bring a desperate ruffian to justice? And who could say that Williams was a ruffian? It was plain that his quarrel with the Sheriff was one of old date and purely personal. He had "stopped" Judge Shannon in order to bring about a duel with the Sheriff. Why should I fight the Sheriff's duels? Justice, indeed! justice had nothing to do with this affair; I did not even know which man was in the right. Reason led directly to the conclusion that I had better turn the horse's head northwards, drive as fast and as far as I could, and take the train as soon as possible out of the country. But while I recognized that this was the only sensible decision, I felt that I could not carry it into action. To run away was impossible; my cheeks burned with shame at the thought.

Was I to give my life for a stupid practical joke?

"Yes!"—a voice within me answered sharply. "It would be well if a man could always choose the cause for which he risks his life, but it may happen that he ought to throw it away for a reason that seems inadequate."

"What ought I to do?" I questioned.

"Go on to Osawotamie, arrest Williams, and bring him into Kiota," replied my other self.

"And if he won't come?"

"Shoot him—you are charged to deliver him 'alive or dead' at the Sheriff's house. No more thinking, drive straight ahead and act as if you were a representative of the law and Williams a criminal. It has to be done."

The resolution excited me, I picked up the reins and proceeded. At the next section-line I turned to the right, and ten or fifteen minutes later saw Osawotamie in the distance.

I drew up, laid the reins on the dashboard, and examined the revolver. It was a small four-shooter, with a large bore. To make sure of its efficiency I took out a cartridge; it was quite new. While weighing it in my hand, the Sheriff's words recurred to me, "It wouldn't stop anyone with grit in him." What did he mean? I didn't want to think, so I put the cartridge in again, cocked and replaced the pistol in my right-side jacket pocket, and drove on. Osawotamie consisted of a single street of straggling frame-buildings. After passing half-a-dozen of them I saw, on the right, one which looked to me like a saloon. It was evidently a stopping-place. There were several hitching-posts, and the house boasted instead of a door two green Venetian blinds

put upon rollers—the usual sign of a drinking-saloon in the West.

I got out of the buggy slowly and carefully, so as not to shift the position of the revolver, and after hitching up the horse, entered the saloon. Coming out of the glare of the sunshine I could hardly see in the darkened room. In a moment or two my eyes grew accustomed to the dim light, and I went over to the bar, which was on my left. The bar-keeper was sitting down; his head and shoulders alone were visible; I asked him for a lemon squash.

"Anythin' in it?" he replied, without lifting his eyes.

"No; I'm thirsty and hot."

"I guessed that was about the figger," he remarked, getting up leisurely and beginning to mix the drink with his back to me.

I used the opportunity to look round the room. Three steps from me stood a tall man, lazily leaning with his right arm on the bar, his fingers touching a half-filled glass. He seemed to be gazing past me into the void, and thus allowed me to take note of his appearance. In shirt-sleeves, like the bar-keeper, he had a belt on in which were two large revolvers with white ivory handles. His face was prepossessing, with large but not irregular features, bronzed fair skin, hazel eyes, and long brown moustache. He looked strong and was lithe of form, as if he had not done much hard bodily work. There was no one else in the room except a man who appeared to be sleeping at a table in the far corner with his head pillowed on his arms.

As I completed this hasty scrutiny of the room

and its inmates, the bar-keeper gave me my squash, and I drank eagerly. The excitement had made me thirsty, for I knew that the crisis must be at hand, but I experienced no other sensation save that my heart was thumping and my throat was dry. Yawning as a sign of indifference (I had resolved to be as deliberate as the Sheriff) I put my hand in my pocket on the revolver. I felt that I could draw it out at once.

I addressed the bar-keeper:

"Say, do you know the folk here in Osawotamie?"

After a pause he replied:

"Most on 'em, I guess."

Another pause and a second question:

"Do you know Tom Williams?"

The eyes looked at me with a faint light of surprise in them; they looked away again, and came back with short, half suspicious, half curious glances.

"Maybe you're a friend of his'n?"

"I don't know him, but I'd like to meet him."

"Would you, though?" Turning half round, the bar-keeper took down a bottle and glass, and poured out some whisky, seemingly for his own consumption. Then: "I guess he's not hard to meet, isn't Williams, ef you and me mean the same man."

"I guess we do," I replied; "Tom Williams is the name."

"That's me," said the tall man who was leaning on the bar near me, "that's my name."

"Are you the Williams that stopped Judge Shannon yesterday?"

"I don't know his name," came the careless reply, "but I stopped a man in a buck-board."

Plucking out my revolver, and pointing it low down on his breast, I said:

"I'm sent to arrest you; you must come with me to Kiota."

Without changing his easy posture, or a muscle of his face, he asked in the same quiet voice:

"What does this mean, anyway? Who sent you to arrest me?"

"Sheriff Johnson," I answered.

The man started upright, and said, as if amazed, in a quick, loud voice:

"Sheriff Johnson sent *you* to arrest me?"

"Yes," I retorted, "Sheriff Samuel Johnson swore me in this morning as his deputy, and charged me to bring you into Kiota."

In a tone of utter astonishment he repeated my words, "Sheriff Samuel Johnson!"

"Yes," I replied, "Samuel Johnson, Sheriff of Elwood County."

"See here," he asked suddenly, fixing me with a look of angry suspicion, "what sort of a man is he? What does he figger like?"

"He's a little shorter than I am," I replied curtly, "with a brown beard and bluish eyes—a square-built sort of man."

"Hell!" There was savage rage and menace in the exclamation.

"You kin put that up!" he added, absorbed once more in thought. I paid no attention to this; I was not going to put the revolver away at his bidding. Presently he asked in his ordinary voice:

"What age man might this Johnson be?"

"About forty or forty-five, I should think."

"And right off Sam Johnson swore you in and sent you to bring me into Kiota—an' him Sheriff?"

"Yes," I replied impatiently, "that's so."

"Great God!" he exclaimed, bringing his clenched right hand heavily down on the bar. "Here, Zeke!" turning to the man asleep in the corner, and again he shouted "Zeke!" Then, with a rapid change of manner, and speaking irritably, he said to me:

"Put that thing up, I say."

The bar-keeper now spoke too: "I guess when Tom sez you kin put it up, you kin. You hain't got no use fur it."

The changes of Williams' tone from wonder to wrath and then to quick resolution showed me that the doubt in him had been laid, and that I had but little to do with the decision at which he had arrived, whatever that decision might be. I understood, too, enough of the Western spirit to know that he would take no unfair advantage of me. I therefore uncocked the revolver and put it back into my pocket. In the meantime Zeke had got up from his resting-place in the corner and had made his way sleepily to the bar. He had taken more to drink than was good for him, though he was not now really drunk.

"Give me and Zeke a glass, Joe," said Williams; "and this gentleman, too, if he'll drink with me, and take one yourself with us."

"No," replied the bar-keeper sullenly, "I'll not drink to any damned foolishness. An' Zeke won't neither."

"Oh, yes, he will," Williams returned persuasively, "and so 'll you, Joe. You aren't goin' back on me."

"No, I'll be just damned if I am," said the bar-keeper, half-conquered.

"What'll you take, sir?" Williams asked me.

"The bar-keeper knows my figger," I answered, half-jestingly, not yet understanding the situation, but convinced that it was turning out better than I had expected.

"And you, Zeke?" he went on.

"The old pizen," Zeke replied.

"And now, Joe, whisky for you and me—the square bottle," he continued, with brisk cheerfulness.

In silence the bar-keeper placed the drinks before us. As soon as the glasses were empty Williams spoke again, putting out his hand to Zeke at the same time:

"Good-bye, old man, so long, but saddle up in two hours. Ef I don't come then, you kin clear; but I guess I'll be with you."

"Good-bye, Joe."

"Good-bye, Tom," replied the bar-keeper, taking the proffered hand, still half-unwillingly, "if you're stuck on it; but the game is to wait for 'em here—anyway that's how I'd play it."

A laugh and shake of the head and Williams addressed me:

"Now, sir, I'm ready if you are." We were walking towards the door, when Zeke broke in:

"Say, Tom, ain't I to come along?"

"No, Zeke, I'll play this hand alone," replied Williams, and two minutes later he and I were seated in the buggy, driving towards Kiota.

We had gone more than a mile before he spoke

again. He began very quietly, as if confiding his thoughts to me:

"I don't want to make no mistake about this business—it ain't worth while. I'm sure you're right, and Sheriff Samuel Johnson sent you, but, maybe, ef you was to think you could kinder bring him before me. There might be two of the name, the age, the looks—though it ain't likely." Then, as if a sudden inspiration moved him:

"Where did he come from, this Sam Johnson, do you know?"

"I believe he came from Pleasant Hill, Missouri. I've heard that he left after a row with his partner, and it seems to me that his partner's name was Williams. But that you ought to know better than I do. By-the-bye, there is one sign by which Sheriff Johnson can always be recognized; he has lost the little finger of his left hand. They say he caught Williams' bowie with that hand and shot him with the right. But why he had to leave Missouri I don't know, if Williams drew first."

"I'm satisfied now," said my companion, "but I guess you hain't got that story correct; maybe you don't know the cause of it nor how it began; maybe Williams didn't draw fust; maybe he was in the right all the way through; maybe—but thar!—the first hand don't decide everythin'. Your Sheriff's the man—that's enough for me."

After this no word was spoken for miles. As we drew near the bridge leading into the town of Kiota I remarked half-a-dozen men standing about. Generally the place was deserted, so the fact astonished me a little. But I said nothing. We

had scarcely passed over half the length of the bridge, however, when I saw that there were quite twenty men lounging around the Kiota end of it. Before I had time to explain the matter to myself, Williams spoke: "I guess he's got out all the vigilantes;" and then bitterly: "The boys in old Mizzouri wouldn't believe this ef I told it on him, the doggoned mean cuss."

We crossed the bridge at a walk (it was forbidden to drive faster over the ricketty structure), and toiled up the hill through the bystanders, who did not seem to see us, though I knew several of them. When we turned to the right to reach the gate of the Sheriff's house, there were groups of men on both sides. No one moved from his place; here and there, indeed, one of them went on whittling. I drew up at the side-walk, threw down the reins, and jumped out of the buggy to hitch up the horse. My task was done.

I had the hitching-rein loose in my hand, when I became conscious of something unusual behind me. I looked round—it was the stillness that foreruns the storm.

Williams was standing on the side-walk facing the low wooden fence, a revolver in each hand, but both pointing negligently to the ground; the Sheriff had just come down the steps of his house; in his hands also were revolvers; his deputy, Jarvis, was behind him on the stoop.

Williams spoke first:

"Sam Johnson, you sent for me, and I've come."

The Sheriff answered firmly, "I did!"

Their hands went up, and crack! crack! crack!

in quick succession, three or four or five reports—I don't know how many. At the first shots the Sheriff fell forward on his face. Williams started to run along the side-walk; the groups of men at the corner, through whom he must pass, closed together; then came another report, and at the same moment he stopped, turned slowly half round, and sank down in a heap like an empty sack.

I hurried to him; he had fallen almost as a tailor sits, but his head was between his knees. I lifted it gently; blood was oozing from a hole in the forehead. The men were about me; I heard them say:

"A derned good shot! Took him in the back of the head. Jarvis kin shoot!"

I rose to my feet. Jarvis was standing inside the fence supported by someone; blood was welling from his bared left shoulder.

"I ain't much hurt," he said, "but I guess the Sheriff's got it bad."

The men moved on, drawing me with them, through the gate to where the Sheriff lay. Martin turned him over on his back. They opened his shirt, and there on the broad chest were two little blue marks, each in the centre of a small mound of pink flesh.

4TH APRIL, 1891.

A MODERN IDYLL.

A MODERN IDYLL.

I CALL it real good of you, Mr. Letgood, to come and see me. Won't you be seated?"

"Thank you. It's very warm to-day; and as I didn't feel like reading or writing, I thought I'd come round."

"You're just too kind for anything! To come an' pay me a visit when you must be tired out with yesterday's preachin'. An' what a sermon you gave us in the mornin'—it was too sweet. I had to wink my eyes pretty hard, an' pull the tears down the back way, or I should have cried right out—and Mrs. Jones watchin' me all the time under that dreadful bonnet."

Mrs. Hooper had begun with a shade of nervousness in the hurried words; but the emotion disappeared as she took up a comfortable pose in the corner of the small sofa.

The Rev. John Letgood, having seated himself in an armchair, looked at her intently before replying. She was well worth looking at, this Mrs. Hooper, as she leaned back on the cushions in her cool white dress, which was so thin and soft and well-fitting that her form could be seen through it almost as clearly as through water. She appeared to be about eighteen years old, and in reality was not yet

twenty. At first sight one would have said of her, "a pretty girl;" but an observant eye on the second glance would have noticed those contradictions in face and in form which bear witness to a certain complexity of nature. Her features were small, regular, and firmly cut; the long, brown eyes looked out confidently under straight, well-defined brows; but the forehead was low, and the sinuous lips a vivid red. So, too, the slender figure and narrow hips formed a contrast with the throat, which pouted in soft, white fulness.

"I am glad you liked the sermon," said the minister, breaking the silence, "for it is not probable that you will hear many more from me." There was just a shade of sadness in the lower tone with which he ended the phrase. He let the sad note drift in unconsciously—by dint of practice he had become an artist in the management of his voice.

"You don't say!" exclaimed Mrs. Hooper, sitting up straight in her excitement. "You ain't goin' to leave us, I hope?"

"Why do you pretend, Belle, to misunderstand me? You know I said three months ago that if you didn't care for me I should have to leave this place. And yesterday I told you that you must make up your mind at once, as I was daily expecting a call to Chicago. Now I have come for your answer, and you treat me as if I were a stranger, and you knew nothing of what I feel for you."

"Oh!" she sighed, languorously nestling back into the corner. "Is that all? I thought for a moment the 'call' had come."

"No, it has not yet; but I am resolved to get an

answer from you to-day, or I shall go away, call or no call."

"What would Nettie Williams say if she heard you?" laughed Mrs. Hooper, with mischievous delight in her eyes.

"Now, Belle," he said in tender remonstrance, leaning forward and taking the small cool hand in his, "what is my answer to be? Do you love me? Or am I to leave Kansas City, and try somewhere else to get again into the spirit of my work? God forgive me, but I want you to tell me to stay. Will you?"

"Of course I will," she returned, while slowly withdrawing her hand. "There ain't anyone wants you to go, and why should you?"

"Why? Because my passion for you prevents me from doing my work. You tease and torture me with doubt, and when I should be thinking of my duties I am wondering whether or not you care for me. Do you love me? I must have a plain answer."

"Love you?" she repeated pensively. "I hardly know, but—"

"But what?" he asked impatiently.

"But—I must just see after the pies; this 'help' of ours is Irish, an' doesn't know enough to turn them in the oven. And Mr. Hooper don't like burnt pies."

She spoke with coquettish gravity, and got up to go out of the room. But when Mr. Letgood also rose, she stopped and smiled—waiting perhaps for him to take his leave. As he did not speak she shook out her frock and then pulled down her bodice at the waist and drew herself up, thus throwing into

relief the willowy outlines of her girlish form. The provocative grace, unconscious or intentional, of the attitude was not lost on her admirer. For an instant he stood irresolute, but when she stepped forward to pass him, he seemed to lose his self-control, and, putting his arms round her, tried to kiss her. With serpent speed and litheness she bowed her head against his chest, and slipped out of the embrace. On reaching the door she paused to say, over her shoulder: "If you'll wait, I'll be back right soon;" then, as if a new thought had occurred to her, she added turning to him: "The Deacon told me he was coming home early to-day, and he'd be real sorry to miss you."

As she disappeared, he took up his hat, and left the house.

It was about four o'clock on a day in mid-June. The sun was pouring down rays of liquid flame; the road, covered inches deep in fine white dust, and the wooden side-walks glowed with the heat, but up and down the steep hills went the minister unconscious of physical discomfort.

"Does she care for me, or not? Why can't she tell me plainly? The teasing creature! Did she give me the hint to go because she was afraid her husband would come in? Or did she want to get rid of me in order not to answer? . . She wasn't angry with me for putting my arms round her, and yet she wouldn't let me kiss her. Why not? She doesn't love him. She married him because she was poor, and he was rich and a deacon. She can't love him. He must be fifty-five if he's a day. Perhaps she doesn't love me either—the little flirt! But how

seductive she is, and what a body, so round and firm and supple—not thin at all. I have the feel of it on my hands now—I can't stand this."

Shaking himself vigorously, he abandoned his meditation, which, like many similar ones provoked by Mrs. Hooper, had begun in vexation and ended in passionate desire. Becoming aware of the heat and dust, he stood still, took off his hat, and wiped his forehead.

The Rev. John Letgood was an ideal of manhood to many women. He was largely built, but not ungainly—the coarseness of the hands being the chief indication of his peasant ancestry. His head was rather round, and strongly set on broad shoulders; the nose was straight and well formed; the dark eyes, however, were somewhat small, and the lower part of the face too massive, though both chin and jaw were clearly marked. A long, thick, brown moustache partly concealed the mouth; the lower lip could just be seen, a little heavy, and sensual; the upper one was certainly flexile and suasive. A good-looking man of thirty, who must have been handsome when he was twenty, though even then, probably, too much drawn by the pleasures of the senses to have had that distinction of person which seems to be reserved for those who give themselves to thought or high emotions.

On entering his comfortable house, he was met by his negro "help," who handed him his "mail":

"I done brot these, Massa; they's all."

"Thanks, Pete," he replied abstractedly, going into his cool study. He flung himself into an armchair before the writing-table, and began to read the

letters. Two were tossed aside carelessly, but on opening the third he sat up with a quick exclamation. Here at last was the "call" he had been expecting, a "call" from the deacons of the Second Baptist Church in Chicago, asking him to come and minister to their spiritual wants, and offering him six thousand dollars a year for his services.

For a moment exultation overcame every other feeling in the man. A light flashed in his eyes as he exclaimed aloud: "It was that sermon did it! What a good thing it was that I knew their senior deacon was in the church on purpose to hear me! How well I brought in the apostrophe on the cultivation of character that won me the prize at college! Ah, I have never done anything finer than that, never! and perhaps never shall now. I had been reading Channing then for months, was steeped in him; but Channing has nothing as good as that in all his works. It has more weight and dignity—dignity is the word—than anything he wrote. And to think of its bringing me this! Six thousand dollars a year and the second church in Chicago, while here they think me well paid with three. Chicago! I must accept it at once. Who knows, perhaps I shall get to New York yet, and move as many thousands as here I move hundreds. No! not I. I do not move them. I am weak and sinful. It is the Holy Spirit, and the power of His grace. O Lord, I am thankful to Thee who hast been good to me unworthy!" A pang of fear shot through him: "Perhaps He sends this to win me away from Belle." His fancy called her up before him as she had lain on the sofa. Again he saw the bright malicious glances and the red lips, the full

white throat, and the slim roundness of her figure. He bowed his head upon his hands and groaned. "O Lord, help me! I know not what to do. Help me, O Lord!"

As if prompted by a sudden inspiration, he started to his feet. "Now she must answer! Now what will she say? Here *is* the call. Six thousand dollars a year! What will she say to that?"

He spoke aloud in his excitement, all that was masculine in him glowing with the sense of hard-won mastery over the tantalizing evasiveness of the woman.

On leaving his house he folded up the letter, thrust it into the breast-pocket of his frock-coat, and strode rapidly up the hill towards Mrs. Hooper's. At first he did not even think of her last words, but when he had gone up and down the first hill and was beginning to climb the second they suddenly came back to him. He did not want to meet her husband—least of all now. He paused. What should he do? Should he wait till to-morrow? No, that was out of the question; he couldn't wait. He must know what answer to send to the call. If Deacon Hooper happened to be at home he would talk to him about the door of the vestry, which would not shut properly. If the Deacon was not there, he would see her and force a confession from her. . .

While the shuttle of his thought flew thus to and fro, he did not at all realize that he was taking for granted what he had refused to believe half an hour before. He felt certain now that Deacon Hooper would not be in, and that Mrs. Hooper had got rid of him on purpose to avoid his importunate

love-making. When he reached the house and rang the bell his first question was:

"Is the Deacon at home?"

"No, sah."

"Is Mrs. Hooper in?"

"Yes, sah."

"Please tell her I should like to see her for a moment. I will not keep her long. Say it's very important."

"Yes, massa, I bring her shuah," said the negress, with a good-natured grin, opening the door of the drawing-room.

In a minute or two Mrs. Hooper came into the room looking as cool and fresh as if "pies" were baked in ice.

"Good day, *again*, Mr. Letgood. Won't you take a chair?"

He seemed to feel the implied reproach, for without noticing her invitation to sit down he came to the point at once. Plunging his hand into his pocket, he handed her the letter from Chicago.

She took it with the quick interest of curiosity, but as she read, the colour deepened in her cheeks, and before she had finished it she broke out, "*Six thousand dollars a year!*"

As she gave the letter back she did not raise her eyes, but said musingly: "That is a call indeed..." Staring straight before her she added: "How strange it should come to-day! Of course you'll accept it."

A moment, and she darted the question at him:

"Does she know? Have you told Miss Williams yet? But there, I suppose you have!" After another pause, she went on:

"What a shame to take you away just when we had all got to know and like you! I suppose we shall have some old fogey now who will preach against dancin' an' spellin'-bees an' surprise-parties. And, of course, he won't like me, or come here an' call as often as you do—makin' the other girls jealous. I shall hate the change!" And in her innocent excitement she slowly lifted her brown eyes to his.

"You know you're talking nonsense, Belle," he replied, with grave earnestness. I've come for *your* answer. If you wish me to stay, if you really care for me, I shall refuse this offer."

"You don't tell!" she exclaimed. "Refuse six thousand dollars a year and a church in Chicago to stay here in Kansas City! I know I shouldn't! Why," and she fixed her eyes on his as she spoke, "you must be real good even to think of such a thing. But then, you won't refuse," she added, pouting. "No one would," she concluded, with profound conviction.

"Oh, yes," answered the minister, moving to her and quietly putting both hands on her waist, while his voice seemed to envelope and enfold her with melodious tenderness.

"Oh, yes, I shall refuse it, Belle, if *you* wish me to; refuse it as I should ten times as great a prize, as I think I should refuse—God forgive me!—heaven itself, if you were not there to make it beautiful."

While speaking he drew her to him gently; her body yielded to his touch, and her gaze, as if fascinated, was drawn into his. But when the flow of words ceased, and he bent to kiss her, the spell

seemed to lose its power over her. In an instant she wound herself out of his arms, and with startled eyes aslant whispered:

"Hush! he's coming! Don't you hear his step?" As Mr. Letgood went again towards her with a tenderly reproachful and incredulous "Now, Belle," she stamped impatiently on the floor while exclaiming in a low, but angry voice, "Do take care! That's the Deacon's step."

At the same moment her companion heard it too. The sounds were distinct on the wooden side-walk, and when they ceased at the little gate four or five yards from the house he knew that she was right. He pulled himself together, and with a man's untimely persistence spoke hurriedly:

"I shall wait for your answer till Sunday morning next. Before then you must have assured me of your love, or I shall go to Chicago—"

Mrs. Hooper's only reply was a contemptuous, flashing look that succeeded in reducing the importunate clergyman to silence—just in time—for as the word "Chicago" passed his lips the handle of the door turned, and Deacon Hooper entered the room.

"Why, how do you do, Mr. Letgood?" said the Deacon cordially. "I'm glad to see you, sir, as you are too, I'm sartin," he added, turning to his wife and putting his arms round her waist and his lips to her cheek in an affectionate caress. "Take a seat, won't you? It's too hot to stand." As Mrs. Hooper sank down beside him on the sofa and their visitor drew over a chair, he went on, taking up again the broken thread of his thought. "No one

thinks more of you than Isabelle. She said only last Sunday there warn't such a preacher as you west of the Mississippi River. How's that for high, eh?"——And then, still seeking back like a dog on a lost scent, he added, looking from his wife to the clergyman, as if recalled to a sense of the actualities of the situation by a certain constraint in their manner, "But what's that I heard about Chicago? There ain't nothin' fresh—Is there?"

"Oh," replied Mrs. Hooper, with a look of remonstrance thrown sideways at her admirer, while with a woman's quick decision she at once cut the knot, "I guess there is something fresh. Mr. Letgood, just think of it, has had a 'call' from the Second Baptist Church in Chicago, and it's six thousand dollars a year. Now who's right about his preachin'? And he ain't goin' to accept it. He's goin' to stay right here. At least," she added coyly, "he said he'd refuse it—Didn't you?"

The Deacon stared from one to the other as Mr. Letgood, with a forced half-laugh which came from a dry throat, answered: "That would be going perhaps a little too far. I said," he went on, catching a coldness in the glance of the brown eyes, "I wished to refuse it. But of course I shall have to consider the matter thoroughly—and seek for guidance."

Wall," said the Deacon in amazement, "ef that don't beat everythin'. I guess nobody would refuse an offer like that. *Six thousand dollars a year!* Six thousand. Why, that's twice what you're gettin' here. You can't refuse that. I know you wouldn't ef you war' a son of mine—as you might be. Six thousand. No, sir. An' the Second

Baptist Church in Chicago is the first; it's the best, the richest, the largest. There ain't no sort of comparison between it and the First. No, sir! There ain't none. Why, James P. Willis, him as was here and heard you—that's how it came about, that's how!—he's the senior Deacon of it, an' I guess he can count dollars with any man this side of New York. Yes, sir, with any man west of the Alleghany Mountains." The breathless excitement of the good Deacon changed gradually as he realized that his hearers were not in sympathy with him, and his speech became almost solemn in its impressiveness as he continued. "See here! This ain't a thing to waste. Six thousand dollars a year to start with, an' the best church in Chicago, you can't expect to do better than that. Though you're young still, when the chance comes, it should be gripped."

"Oh, pshaw!" broke in Mrs. Hooper irritably, twining her fingers and tapping the carpet with her foot, "Mr. Letgood doesn't want to leave Kansas City. Don't you understand? Perhaps he likes the folk here just as well as any in Chicago." No words could describe the glance which accompanied this. It was appealing, and coquettish, and triumphant, and the whole battery was directed full on Mr. Letgood, who had by this time recovered his self-possession.

"Of course," he said, turning to the Deacon and overlooking Mrs. Hooper's appeal, "I know all that, and I don't deny that the 'call' at first seemed to draw me." Here his voice dropped as if he were speaking to himself: "It offers a wider and a higher

sphere of work, but there's work, too, to be done here, and I don't know that the extra salary ought to tempt me. *Take neither scrip nor money in your purse,*" and he smiled, "you know."

"Yes," said the Deacon, his eyes narrowing as if amazement were giving place to a new emotion; "yes, but that ain't meant quite literally, I reckon. Still, it's fer you to judge. But ef you refuse six thousand dollars a year, why, there are mighty few who would, and that's all I've got to say—mighty few," he added emphatically, and stood up as if to shake off the burden of a new and, therefore, unwelcome thought.

When the minister also rose, the physical contrast between the two men became significant. Mr. Letgood's heavy frame, due to self-indulgence or to laziness, might have been taken as a characteristic product of the rich, western prairies, while Deacon Hooper was of the pure Yankee type. His figure was so lank and spare that, though not quite so tall as his visitor, he appeared to be taller. His face was long and angular; the round, clear, blue eyes the finest feature of it, the narrowness of the forehead the worst. The mouth-corners were drawn down, and the lips hardened to a line by constant compression. No trace of sensuality. How came this man, grey with age, to marry a girl whose appeal to the senses was already so obvious? The eyes and prominent temples of the idealist supplied the answer. Deacon Hooper was a New Englander, trained in the bitterest competition for wealth, and yet the Yankee in him masked a fund of simple, kindly optimism, which showed itself

chiefly in his devoted affection for his wife. He had not thought of his age when he married, but of her and her poverty. And possibly he was justified. The snow-garment of winter protects the tender spring wheat.

"It's late," Mr. Letgood began slowly, "I must be going home now. I thought you might like to hear the news, as you are my senior Deacon. Your advice seems excellent; I shall weigh the 'call' carefully; but"—with a glance at Mrs. Hooper—"I am disposed to refuse it." No answering look came to him. He went on firmly and with emphasis, "*I wish* to refuse it.—Good day, Mrs. Hooper, *till next Sunday*. Good day, Deacon."

"Good day, Mr. Letgood," she spoke with a little air of precise courtesy.

"Good day, sir," replied the Deacon, cordially shaking the proffered hand, while he accompanied his pastor to the street door.

The sun was sinking, and some of the glory of the sunset colouring seemed to be reflected in Deacon Hooper's face, as he returned to the drawing-room and said with profound conviction:

"Isabelle, that man's jest about as good as they make them. He's what I call a real Christian—one that thinks of duty first and himself last. Ef that ain't a Christian, I'd like to know what is."

"Yes," she rejoined meditatively, as she busied herself arranging the chairs and tidying the sofa into its usual stiff primness; "I guess he's a good man." And her cheek flushed softly.

"Wall," he went on warmly, "I reckon we ought to do somethin' in this. There ain't no question but

he fills the church. Ef we raised the pew-rents we could offer him an increase of salary to stay—I guess that could be done."

"Oh! don't do anything," exclaimed the wife, as if awaking to the significance of this proposal, "anyway not until he has decided. It would look —mean, don't you think? to offer him somethin' more to stay."

"I don't know but you're right, Isabelle; I don't know but you're right," repeated her husband thoughtfully. "It'll look better if he decides before hearin' from us. There ain't no harm, though, in thinkin' the thing over and speakin' to the other Deacons about it. I'll kinder find out what they feel."

"Yes," she replied mechanically, almost as if she had not heard. "Yes, that's all right." And she slowly straightened the cloth on the centre-table, given over again to her reflections.

Mr. Letgood walked home, ate his supper, went to bed and slept that night as only a man does whose nervous system has been exhausted by various and intense emotions. He even said his prayers by rote. And like a child he slept with tightly-clenched fists, for in him, as in the child, the body's claims were predominant.

When he awoke next morning, the sun was shining in at his bedroom window, and at once his thoughts went back to the scenes and emotions of the day before. An unusual liveliness of memory enabled him to review the very words which Mrs. Hooper had used. He found nothing to regret. He had certainly gained ground by telling her of

the call. The torpor which had come upon him the previous evening formed a complete contrast to the blithesome vigour he now enjoyed. He seemed to himself to be a different man, recreated, as it were, and endowed with fresh springs of life. While he lay in the delightful relaxation and warmth of the bed, and looked at the stream of sunshine which flowed across the room, he became confident that all would go right.

"Yes," he decided, "she cares for me, or she would never have wished me to stay. Even the Deacon helped me—" The irony of the fact shocked him. He would not think of it. He might get a letter from her by two o'clock. With pleasure thrilling through every nerve, he imagined how she would word her confession. For she had yielded to him; he had felt her body move towards him and had seen the surrender in her eyes. While musing thus, passion began to stir in him, and with passion impatience.

"Only half-past six o'clock," he said to himself, pushing his watch again under the pillow; "eight hours to wait till mail time. Eight endless hours. What a plague!"

His own irritation annoyed him, and he willingly took up again the thread of his amorous reverie: "What a radiant face she has, what fine nervefulness in the slim fingers, what softness in the full throat!" Certain incidents in his youth before he had studied for the ministry came back to him, bringing the blood to his cheeks and making his temples throb. As the recollections grew vivid they became a torment. To regain quiet pulses he forced his mind

to dwell upon the details of his "conversion"—his sudden resolve to live a new life and to give himself up to the service of the divine Master. The yoke was not easy; the burden was not light. On the contrary. He remembered innumerable contests with his rebellious flesh, contests in which he was never completely victorious for more than a few days together, but in which, especially during the first heat of the new enthusiasm, he had struggled desperately. Had his efforts been fruitless? . . .

He thought with pride of his student days—mornings given to books and to dreams of the future, and evenings marked by passionate emotions, new companions reinspiring him continually with fresh ardour. The time spent at college was the best of his life. He had really striven, then, as few strive, to deserve the prize of his high calling. During those years, it seemed to him, he had been all that an earnest Christian should be. He recalled, with satisfaction, the honours he had won in Biblical knowledge and in history, and the more easily gained rewards for rhetoric. It was only natural that he should have been immediately successful as a preacher. How often he had moved his flock to tears! No wonder he had got on.

Those first successes, and the pleasures which they brought with them of gratified vanity, had resulted in turning him from a Christian into an orator. He understood this dimly, but he thrust back the unwelcome truth with the reflection that his triumphs in the pulpit dated from the time when he began consciously to treat preaching as an art. After all, was he not there to win souls to Christ, and had not

Christ himself praised the wisdom of the serpent? Then came the change from obscurity and narrow living in the country to Kansas City and luxury. He had been wise in avoiding that girl at Pleasant Hill. He smiled complacently as he thought of her dress, manners, and speech. Yet she was pretty, very pretty, and she had loved him with the exclusiveness of womanhood, but still he had done right. He congratulated himself upon his intuitive knowledge that there were finer girls in the world to be won. He had not fettered himself foolishly through pity or weakness.

During his ten years of life as a student and minister he had been chaste. He had not once fallen into flagrant sin. His fervour of unquestioning faith had saved him at the outset, and, later, habit and prudence. He lingered over his first meeting with Mrs. Hooper. He had not thought much of her then, he remembered, although she had appeared to him to be pretty and perfectly dressed. She had come before him as an embodiment of delicacy and refinement, and her charm had increased, as he began, in spite of himself, to notice her peculiar seductiveness. Recollecting how insensibly the fascination which she exercised over him had grown, and the sudden madness of desire that had forced him to declare his passion, he moaned with vexation. If only she had not been married. What a fatality! How helpless man was, tossed hither and thither by the waves of trivial circumstance!

She had certainly encouraged him; it was her alternate moods of yielding and reserve which had awakened his senses. She had been flattered by

his admiration, and had sought to call it forth. But, in the beginning, at least, he had struggled against the temptation. He had prayed for help in the sore combat—how often and how earnestly!—but no help had come. Heaven had been deaf to his entreaties. And he had soon realized that struggling in this instance was of no avail. He loved her; he desired her with every nerve of his body.

There was hardly any use in trying to fight against such a craving as that, he thought. But yet, in his heart of hearts, he was conscious that his religious enthusiasm, the aspiration towards the ideal life and the reverence for Christ's example, would bring about at least one supreme conflict in which his passion might possibly be overcome. He dreaded the crisis, the outcome of which he foresaw would be decisive for his whole life. He wanted to let himself slide quietly down the slope; but all the while he felt that something in him would never consent thus to endanger his hopes of Heaven.

And Hell! He hated the thought! He strove to put it away from him, but it would not be denied. His early habits of self-analysis reasserted themselves. What if his impatience of the idea were the result of obdurate sinfulness—sinfulness which might never be forgiven? He compelled himself, therefore, to think of Hell, tried to picture it to himself, and the soft, self-indulgent nature of the man shuddered as he realized the meaning of the word. At length the torture grew too acute. He would not think any longer; he could not; he would strive to do the right. "O Lord!" he exclaimed, as he slipped out of bed on to his knees, "O Christ!

help Thy servant! Pity me, and aid!" Yet, while the words broke from his lips in terrified appeal, he knew that he did not wish to be helped. He rose to his feet in sullen dissatisfaction.

The happy alertness which he had enjoyed at his waking had disappeared; the self-torment of the last few minutes had tired him; disturbed and vexed in mind, he began to dress. While moving about in the sunlight his thoughts gradually became more cheerful, and by the time he left his room he had regained his good spirits.

After a short stroll he went into his study and read the daily paper. He then took up a book till dinner-time. He dined, and afterwards forgot himself in a story of African travels. It was only the discomfort of the intense heat which at length reminded him that, though it was now past two o'clock, he had received no letter from Mrs. Hooper. But he was resolved not to think about her, for thoughts of her, he knew, would lead to fears concerning the future, which would in turn force him to decide upon a course of action. If he determined to commit the sin, his guilt would thereby be increased, and he would not pledge himself to refrain from it. "She couldn't write last night with the Deacon at her elbow all the time," he decided, and began to read again. Darkness had fallen before he remembered that he owed an immediate answer to the letter from Chicago. After a little consideration, he sat down and wrote as follows:

"Dear Brothers in Christ,

"Your letter has just reached me. Needless to say it has touched me deeply. You call me to a wider

ministry and more arduous duties. The very munificence of the remuneration which you offer leads me to doubt my own fitness for so high a post. You must bear with me a little, and grant me a few days for reflection. The 'call,' as you know, must be answered from within, from the depths of my soul, before I can be certain that it comes from Above, and this Divine assurance has not yet been vouchsafed to me.

"I was born and brought up here in Missouri, where I am now labouring, not without—to Jesus be the praise!—some small measure of success. I have many ties here, and many dear friends and fellow-workers in Christ's vineyard from whom I could not part without great pain. But I will prayerfully consider your request. I shall seek for guidance where alone it is to be found, at the foot of the Great White Throne, and within a week or so at most I hope to be able to answer you with the full and joyous certitude of the Divine blessing.

"In the meantime, believe that I thank you deeply, dear Brethren, for your goodness to me, and that I shall pray in Jesus' Name that the blessing of the Holy Ghost may be with you abundantly now and for evermore.

"Your loving Servant in Christ,

"JOHN P. LETGOOD."

He liked this letter so much that he read it over a great many times. It committed him to nothing; it was dignified and yet sufficiently grateful, and the large-hearted piety which appeared to inform it pleased him even more than the alliteration of the words "born and brought up." He had at first written "born and reared;" but in spite of the fear lest "brought up" should strike the simple Deacons of the Second Baptist Church in Chicago as unfamiliar and far-fetched, he could not resist the

assonance. After directing the letter he went upstairs to bed, and his prayers that night were more earnest than they had been of late—perhaps because he avoided the dangerous topic. The exercise of his talent as a letter-writer having put him on good terms with himself, he slept soundly.

When he awoke in the morning his mood had changed. The day was cloudy; a thunderstorm was brewing, and had somehow affected his temper. As soon as he opened his eyes he was aware of the fact that Mrs. Hooper had not written to him, even on Tuesday morning, when she must have been free, for the Deacon always went early to his dry-goods store. The consciousness of this neglect irritated him beyond measure. He tried, therefore, to think of Chicago and the persons who frequented the Second Baptist Church. Perhaps, he argued, they were as much ahead of the people in Kansas City as Mrs. Hooper was superior to any woman he had previously known. But on this way of thought he could not go far. The houses in Chicago were no doubt much finer, the furniture more elegant; the living, too, was perhaps better, though he could not imagine how that could be; there might even be cleverer and handsomer women there than Mrs. Hooper; but certainly no one lived in Chicago or anywhere else in the world who could tempt and bewitch him as she did. She was formed to his taste, made to his desire. As he recalled her, now laughing at him, now admiring him, to-day teasing him with coldness, to-morrow encouraging him, he realized with exasperation that her contradictions constituted her charm. He acknowledged reluc-

tantly that her odd turns of speech tickled his intellect just as her lithe grace of movement excited his senses. But the number and strength of the ties that bound him to her made his anger keener. Where could she hope to find such love as his? She ought to write to him. Why didn't she? How could he come to a decision before he knew whether she loved him or not? In any case he would show her that he was a man. He would not try to see her until she had written—not under any circumstances.

After dinner and mail time his thoughts ran in another channel. In reality she was not anything so wonderful. Most men, he knew, did not think her more than pretty; "pretty Mrs. Hooper" was what she was usually called—nothing more. No one ever dreamed of saying she was beautiful or fascinating. No; she was pretty, and that was all. He was the only person in Kansas City or perhaps in the world to whom she was altogether and perfectly desirable. She had no reason to be so conceited or to presume on her power over him. If she were the wonder she thought herself she would surely have married someone better than old Hooper, with his lank figure, grey hairs, and Yankee twang. He took a pleasure in thus depreciating the woman he loved—it gave his anger vent, and seemed to make her acquisition more probable. When the uselessness of the procedure became manifest to him, he found that his doubts of her affection had crystallized.

This was the dilemma; she had not written either out of coquetry or because she did not really

care for him. If the former were the true reason, she was cruel; if the latter, she ought to tell him so at once, and he would try to master himself. On no hypothesis was she justified in leaving him without a word. Tortured alternately by fear, hope, and anger, he paced up and down his study all the day long. Now, he said to himself, he would go and see her, and forthwith he grew calm—that was what his nature desired. But the man in him refused to be so servile. He had told her that she must write; to that he would hold, whatever it cost him. Again, he broke out in bitter blame of her.

At length he made up his mind to strive to forget her. But what if she really cared for him, loved him as he loved her? In that case if he went away she would be miserable, as wretched as he would be. How unkind it was of her to leave him without a decided answer, when he could not help thinking of her happiness! No; she did not love him. He had read enough about women and seen enough of them to imagine that they never torture the man they really love. He would give her up and throw himself again into his work. He could surely do that. Then he remembered that she was married, and must, of course, see that she would risk her position—everything—by declaring her love. Perhaps prudence kept her silent. Once more he was plunged in doubt.

He was glad when supper was ready, for that brought, at least for half an hour, freedom from thought. After the meal was finished he realized that he was weary of it all—heart-sick of the suspense. The storm broke, and the flashing of the lightning

and the falling sheets of rain brought him relief. The air became lighter and purer. He went to bed and slept heavily.

On the Thursday morning he awoke refreshed, and at once determined not to think about Mrs. Hooper. It only needed resolution, he said to himself, in order to forget her entirely. Her indifference, shown in not writing to him, should be answered in that way. He took up his pocket Bible, and opened it at the Gospels. The beautiful story soon exercised its charm upon his impressionable nature, and after a couple of hours' reading he closed the book comforted, and restored to his better self. He fell on his knees and thanked God for this crowning mercy. From his heart went forth a hymn of praise for the first time in long weeks. The words of the Man of Sorrows had lifted him above the slough. The marvel of it! How could he ever thank Him enough? His whole life should now be devoted to setting forth the wonders of His grace. When he arose he felt at peace with himself and full of goodwill to everyone. He could even think of Mrs. Hooper calmly—with pity and grave kindliness.

After his midday dinner and a brisk walk—he paid no attention to the mail time—he prepared to write the sermon which he intended to preach as his farewell to his congregation on the following Sunday. He was determined now to leave Kansas City and go to Chicago. But as soon as he began to consider what he should say, he became aware of a difficulty. He could talk and write of accepting the "call" because it gave him "a wider ministry," and

so forth, but the ugly fact would obtrude itself that he was relinquishing three thousand dollars a year to accept six, and he was painfully conscious that this knowledge would be uppermost in the minds of his hearers. Most men in his position would have easily put the objection out of their minds. But he could not put it aside carelessly, and it was characteristic of him to exaggerate its importance. He dearly loved to play what the French call *le beau rôle*, even at the cost of his self-interest. Of a sensitive, artistic temperament, he had for years nourished his intellect with good books. He had always striven, too, to set before his hearers high ideals of life and conduct. His nature was now subdued to the stuff he had worked in. As an artist, an orator, it was all but impossible for him to justify what must seem like sordid selfishness. He moved about in his chair uneasily, and strove to look at the subject from a new point of view. In vain; six thousand dollars a year instead of three —that was to be his theme.

The first solution of the problem which suggested itself to him was to express his very real disdain of such base material considerations, but no sooner did the thought occur to him than he was fain to reject it. He knew well that his hearers in Kansas City would refuse to accept that explanation even as "high-falutin' bunkum!" He then tried to select a text in order to ease for a time the strain upon his reflective faculties. "Feed my sheep" was his first choice—"the largest flock possible, of course." But no, that was merely the old cant in new words.

He came reluctantly to the conclusion that there

was no noble way out of the difficulty. He felt this the more painfully because, before sitting down to think of his sermon, he had immersed himself, to use his own words, in the fountain-head of self-sacrificing enthusiasm. And now he could not show his flock that there was any trace of self-denial in his conduct. It was apparent that his acceptance of the call made a great sermon an utter impossibility. He must say as little about the main point as possible, glide quickly, in fact, over the thin ice. But his disappointment was none the less keen; there was no splendid peroration to write; there would be no eyes gazing up at him through a mist of tears. His sensations were those of an actor with an altogether uncongenial and stupid part.

After some futile efforts he abandoned the attempt to sketch out a sermon. Some words would come to him at the time, and they would have to do. In the evening a new idea presented itself to his over-excited brain. Might not his dislike of that sermon be a snare set by the Devil to induce him to reject the call and stay in Kansas City? No. A fine sermon would do good—the Evil One could not desire that—perhaps even more good than his sin would do harm? Puzzled and incapable of the effort required to solve this fresh problem he went to bed, after praying humbly for guidance and enlightenment.

On the Friday morning he rose from his knees with a burden of sorrow. No kindly light had illumined the darkness of his doubtings. Yet he was conscious of a perfect sincerity in his desires and in his prayers. Suddenly he remembered that, when

in a pure frame of mind, he had only considered the acceptance of the call. But in order to be guided aright, he must abandon himself entirely to God's directing. In all honesty of purpose, he began to think of the sermon he could deliver if he resolved to reject the call. Ah! that sermon needed but little meditation. With such a decision to announce, he felt that he could carry his hearers with him to heights of which they knew nothing. Their very vulgarity and sordidness of nature would help instead of hindering him. No one in Kansas City would doubt for a moment the sincerity of the self-sacrifice involved in rejecting six thousand dollars a year for three. That sermon could be preached with effect from any text. "Feed my sheep" even would do. He thrilled in anticipation, as a great actor thrills when reading a part which will allow him to discover all his powers, and in which he is certain to "bring down the house." Completely carried away by his emotions, he began to turn the sermon over in his head. First of all he sought for a text; not this one, nor that one, but a few words breathing the very spirit of Christ's self-abnegation. He soon found what he wanted: "For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for My sake, shall find it." The unearthly beauty of the thought and the divine simplicity of its expression took the orator captive. As he imagined that Godlike Figure in Galilee, and seemed to hear the words drop like pearls from His lips, so he saw himself in the pulpit, and had a foretaste of the effect of his own eloquence. Ravished by the vision, he proceeded to write and

re-write the peroration. Every other part he could trust to his own powers and to the inspiration of the theme, but the peroration he meant to make finer even than his apostrophe on the cultivation of character, which hitherto had been the high-water mark of his achievement.

At length he finished his task, but not before sunset, and he felt weary and hungry. He ate and rested. In the complete relaxation of mental strain, he understood all at once what he had done. He had decided to remain in Kansas City. But to remain meant to meet Mrs. Hooper day after day, to be thrown together with her even by her foolishly confiding husband; it meant perpetual temptation, and at last—a fall! And yet God had guided him to choose that sermon rather than the other. He had abandoned himself passively to His guidance—could *that* lead to the brink of the pit? . . . He cried out suddenly like one in bodily anguish. He had found the explanation. God cared for no half-victories. Flight to Chicago must seem to Him the veriest cowardice. God intended him to stay in Kansas City and conquer the awful temptation face to face. When he realized this, he fell on his knees and prayed as he had never prayed in all his life before. If entreated humbly, God would surely temper the wind to the shorn lamb; He knew His servant's weakness. "*Lead us not into temptation,*" he cried again and again, for the first time in his life comprehending what now seemed to him the awful significance of the words. "*Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*"—thus he begged and wept. But even when, exhausted in body and

in mind, he rose from his knees, he had found no comfort. Like a child, with streaming eyes and quivering features, he stumbled upstairs to bed and fell asleep, repeating over and over again mechanically the prayer that the cup might pass from him.

On the Saturday morning he awoke as from a hideous nightmare. Before there was time for thought he was aware of what oppressed and frightened him. The knowledge of his terrible position weighed him down. He was worn out and feverishly ill; incapable of reflection or resolution, conscious chiefly of pain and weariness, and a deep dumb revolt against his impending condemnation. After lying thus for some time, drinking the cup of bitterness to the very dregs, he got up, and went downstairs. Yielding to habit he opened the Bible. But the Book had no message for him. His tired brain refused, for minutes together, to take in the sense of the printed words. The servant found him utterly miserable and helpless when she went to tell him that "the dinner was a-gittin' cold."

The food seemed to restore him, and during the first two hours of digestion he was comparatively peaceful in being able to live without thinking; but when the body had recovered its vigour, the mind grew active, and the self-torture recommenced. For some hours—he never knew how many—he suffered in this way; then a strange calm fell upon him. Was it the Divine help which had come at last, or despair, or the fatigue of an overwrought spirit? He knelt down and prayed once more, but this time his prayer consisted simply in placing

before his Heavenly Father the exact state of the case. He was powerless; God should do with him according to His purpose, only he felt unable to resist if the temptation came up against him. Jesus, of course, could remove the temptation or strengthen him if He so willed. His servant was in His hands.

After continuing in this strain for some time he got up slowly, calm but hopeless. There was no way of escape for him. He took up the Bible and attempted again to read it; but of a sudden he put it down, and throwing his outspread arms on the table and bowing his head upon them he cried:

"My God, forgive me! I cannot hear Thy voice, nor feel Thy presence. I can only see her face and feel her body."

And then hardened as by the consciousness of unforgivable blaspheming, he rose with set face, lit his candle, and went to bed.

The week had passed much as usual with Mrs. Hooper and her husband. On the Tuesday he had seen most of his brother Deacons and found that they thought as he did. All were agreed that something should be done to testify to their gratitude, if indeed their pastor refused the "call." In the evening, after supper, Mr. Hooper narrated to his wife all that he had done and all that the others had said. When he asked for her opinion she approved of his efforts. A little while later she turned to him: "I wonder why Mr. Letgood doesn't marry?" As she spoke she laid down her work. With a tender smile the Deacon drew her on to his knees in the armchair, and pushing up his

spectacles (he had been reading a dissertation on the meaning of the Greek verb βαπτίζω) said with infinite, playful tenderness in his voice:

"'Tain't everyone can find a wife like you, my dear." He was rewarded for the flattering phrase with a little slap on the cheek. He continued thoughtfully: "'Taint everyone either that wants to take care of a wife. Some folk hain't got much affection in 'em, I guess; perhaps Mr. Letgood hain't." To the which Mrs. Hooper answered not in words, but her lips curved into what might be called a smile, a contented smile as from the heights of superior knowledge.

Mr. Letgood's state of mind on the Sunday morning was too complex for complete analysis: he did not attempt the task. He preferred to believe that he had told God the whole truth without any attempt at reservation. He had thereby placed himself in His hands, and was no longer chiefly responsible. He would not even think of what he was about to do, further than that he intended to refuse the call and to preach the sermon the peroration of which he had so carefully prepared. After dressing he sat down in his study and committed this passage to memory. He pictured to himself with pleasure the effect it would surely produce upon his hearers. When Pete came to tell him the buggy was ready to take him to church, he got up almost cheerfully, and went out.

The weather was delightful, as it is in June in that part of the Western States. From midday until about four o'clock the temperature is that of mid-

summer, but the air is exceedingly dry and light, and one breathes it in the morning with a sense of exhilaration. While driving to church Mr. Letgood's spirits rose. He chatted with his servant Pete, and even took the reins once for a few hundred yards. But when they neared the church his gaiety forsook him. He stopped talking, and appeared to be a little preoccupied. From time to time he courteously greeted one of his flock on the sidewalk: but that was all. As he reached the church, the Partons drove up, and of course he had to speak to them. After the usual conventional remarks and shaking of hands, the minister turned up the sidewalk which led to the vestry. He had not taken more than four or five steps in this direction before he paused and looked up the street. He shrugged his shoulders, however, immediately at his own folly, and walked on: "Of course she couldn't send a messenger with a note. On Sundays the Deacon was with her."

As he opened the vestry door, and stepped into the little room, he stopped short. Mrs. Hooper was there, coming towards him with outstretched hand and radiant smile:

"Good mornin', Mr. Letgood, all the Deacons are here to meet you, and they let me come; because I was the first you told the news to, and because I'm sure you're not goin' to leave us. Besides, I wanted to come."

He could not help looking at her for a second as he took her hand and bowed:

"Thank you, Mrs. Hooper." Not trusting himself further, he began to shake hands with the

assembled elders. In answer to one who expressed the hope that they would keep him, he said slowly and gravely:

"I always trust something to the inspiration of the moment, but I confess I am greatly moved to refuse this call."

"That's what I said," broke in Mr. Hooper triumphantly, "and I said, too, there were mighty few like you, and I meant it. But we don't want you to act against yourself, though we'd be mighty glad to hev you stay."

A chorus of "Yes, sir! Yes, indeed! That's so" went round the room in warm approval, and then, as the minister did not answer save with an abstracted, wintry smile, the Deacons began to file into the church. Curiously enough Mrs. Hooper having moved away from the door during this scene was now, necessarily it seemed, the last to leave the room. While she was passing him, Mr. Letgood bent towards her and in an eager tone whispered:

"And my answer?"

Mrs. Hooper paused, as if surprised.

"Oh! ain't you men stupid," she murmured and with a smile tossed the question over her shoulder: "What *did* I come here for?"

That sermon of Mr. Letgood's is still remembered in Kansas City. It is not too much to say that the majority of his hearers believed him to be inspired. And, in truth, as an artistic performance his discourse was admirable. After standing for some moments with his hand upon the desk, apparently lost in thought, he began in the quietest tone

to read the letter from the Deacons of the Second Baptist Church in Chicago. He then read his reply, begging them to give him time to consider their request. He had considered it—prayerfully. He would read the passage of Holy Scripture which had suggested the answer he was about to send to the call. He paused again. The rustling of frocks and the occasional coughings ceased—the audience straining to catch the decision—while in a higher key he recited the verse, "For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for My sake, shall find it."

As the violinist knows when his instrument is perfectly attuned, so Mr. Letgood knew when he repeated the text that his hearers had surrendered themselves to him to be played upon. It would be useless here to reproduce the sermon, which lasted for nearly an hour, and altogether impossible to give any account of the preacher's gestures or dramatic pauses, or of the modulations and inflections of his voice, which now seemed to be freighted with passionate earnestness, now quivered in pathetic appeal, and now grew musical in the dying fall of some poetic phrase. The effect was astonishing. While he was speaking simply of the text as embodying the very spirit of the Glad Tidings which Christ first delivered to the world, not a few women were quietly weeping. It was impossible, they felt, to listen unmoved to that voice.

But when he went on to show the necessity of renunciation as the first step towards the perfecting of character, even the hard, keen faces of the men before him began to relax and change expression.

He dwelt, in turn, upon the startling novelty of Christ's teaching and its singular success. He spoke of the shortness of human life, the vanity of human effort, and the ultimate reward of those who sacrifice themselves for others, as Jesus did, and out of the same divine spirit of love. He thus came to the peroration. He began it in the manner of serious conversation.

All over the United States the besetting sin of the people was the desire of wealth. He traced the effects of the ignoble struggle for gain in the degradation of character, in the debased tone of public and private life. The main current of existence being defiled, his duty was clear. Even more than other men he was pledged to resist the evil tendency of the time. In some ways, no doubt, he was as frail and faulty as the weakest of his hearers, but to fail in this respect would be, he thought, to prove himself unworthy of his position. That a servant of Christ in the nineteenth century should seek wealth, or allow it in any way to influence his conduct, appeared to him to be much the same unpardonable sin as cowardice in a soldier or dishonesty in a man of business. He could do but little to show what the words of his text meant to him, but one thing he could do and would do joyously. He would write to the good Deacons in Chicago to tell them that he intended to stay in Kansas City, and to labour on among the people whom he knew and loved, and some of whom, he believed, knew and loved him. He would not be tempted by the greater position offered to him or by the larger salary. "*For whosoever will save his*

life, shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for My sake, shall find it."

As his voice broke over the last words, there was scarcely a dry eye in the church. Many of the women were sobbing audibly, and Mrs. Hooper had long ago given up the attempt "to pull her tears down the back way." She expressed the general sentiment of her sex when she said afterwards, "It was just too lovely for anythin'." And the men were scarcely less affected, though they were better able to control their emotion. The joyous renunciation of three thousand dollars a year struck these hard men of business as something almost uncanny. They would have considered it the acme of folly in an ordinary man, but in a preacher they felt vaguely that it was admirable.

When Deacon Hooper met his brother Deacons before the platform where the collection-plates were kept, he whispered, "The meetin' is at my house at three o'clock. Be on time." His tone was decided, as were also the nods which accepted the invitation.

After the service Mr. Letgood withdrew quietly without going, as usual, amongst his congregation. This pleased even Mrs. Parton, whose husband was a judge of the Supreme Court. She said: "It was elegant of him."

Mr. Hooper received the twelve Deacons in his drawing-room, and when the latest comer was seated, began:

"There ain't no need for me to tell you, brethren, why I asked you all to come round here this afternoon. After that sermon this mornin' I guess we're

all sot upon showin' our minister that we appreciate him. There are mighty few men with three thousand dollars a year who'd give up six thousand. It seems to me a pretty good proof that a man's a Christian ef he'll do that. 'Tain't being merely a Christian: it's Christ-like. We must keep Mr. Letgood right here: he's the sort o' man we want. If they come from Chicago after him now, they'll be comin' from New York next, an' he oughtn't to be exposed to sich great temptation.

"I allow that we'll be able to raise the pew-rents from the first of January next, to bring in another thousand or fifteen hundred dollars a year, and I propose that we Deacons should jest put our hands deep down in our pockets and give Mr. Letgood that much anyway for this year, and promise the same for the future. I'm willin', as senior Deacon, though not the richest, to start the list with two hundred dollars."

In five minutes the money was subscribed, and it was agreed that each man should pay in his contribution to the name of Mr. Hooper at the First National Bank next day; Mr. Hooper could then draw his cheque for the sum.

"Wall," said the Deacon, again getting up, "that's settled, but I've drawn that cheque already. Mrs. Hooper and me talked the thing over," he added half apologetically, and as if to explain his unbusinesslike rashness; "an' she thinks we oughter go right now to Mr. Letgood as a sort of surprise party an' tell him what we hev decided—that is, ef you're all agreed."

They were, although one or two objected to a

" surprise party " being held on Sunday. But Deacon Hooper overruled the objection by saying that he could find no better *word*, though of course 'twas really not a " surprise party." After this explanation, someone proposed that Deacon Hooper should make the presentation, and that Mrs. Hooper should be asked to accompany them. When Mr. Hooper went into the dining-room to find his wife she was already dressed to go out, and when he expressed surprise and delivered himself of his mission, she said simply :

" Why, I only dressed to go and see Mrs. Jones, who's ill, but I guess I'll go along with you first."

The same afternoon Mr. Letgood was seated in his study considering a sermon for the evening—it would have to be very different from that of the morning, he felt, or else it would fall flat.

He still avoided thinking of his position. The die was cast now, and having struggled hard against the temptation he tried to believe that he was not chiefly responsible. In the back of his mind was the knowledge that his responsibility would become clear to him some time or other, but he confined it in the furthest chamber of his brain with repentance as the guardian.

He had just decided that his evening address must be doctrinal and argumentative, when he became aware of steps in the drawing-room. Opening the door he found himself face to face with his Deacons. Before he could speak, Deacon Hooper began:

" Mr. Letgood ! We, the Deacons of your church, hev come to see you. We want to tell you how we

appreciate your decision this mornin'. It was Christ-like! And we're all proud of you, an' glad you're goin' to stay with us. But we allow that it ain't fair or to be expected that you should refuse six thousand dollars a year with only three. So we've made a purse for this year among ourselves of fifteen hundred dollars extry, which we hope you'll accept. Next year the pew-rents can be raised to bring in the same sum; anyway, it shall be made up.

"There ain't no use in talkin'; but you, sir, hev jest sot us an example of how one who loves the Lord Jesus, and Him only, should act, and we ain't goin' to remain far behind. No, sir, we ain't. Thar's the cheque."

As he finished speaking, tears stood in the kind, honest, blue eyes.

Mr. Letgood took the cheque mechanically, and mechanically accepted at the same time the Deacon's outstretched hand; but his eyes sought Mrs. Hooper's, who stood behind the knot of men with her handkerchief to her face. In a moment or two, recalled to himself by the fact that one after the other all the Deacons wanted to shake his hand, he tried to sustain his part in the ceremony. He said:

"My dear brothers, I thank you each and all, and accept your gift in the spirit in which you offer it. I need not say that I knew nothing of your intention when I preached this morning. It is not the money that I'm thinking of now, but your kindness. I thank you again."

After a few minutes' casual conversation, consist-

ing chiefly of praise of the "wonderful discourse" of the morning, Mr. Letgood proposed that they should all have iced coffee with him; there was nothing so refreshing; he wanted them to try it; and though he was a bachelor, if Mrs. Hooper would kindly give her assistance and help him with his cook, he was sure they would enjoy a glass. With a smile she consented. Stepping into the passage after her and closing the door, he said hurriedly, with anger and suspicion in his voice:

"You didn't get this up as my answer? You didn't think I'd take money instead, did you?"

Demurely, Mrs. Hooper turned her head round as he spoke, and leaning against him while he put his arms round her waist, answered with arch reproach:

"You are just too silly for anythin'."

Then, with something like the movement of a cat loath to lose the contact of the caressing hand, she turned completely towards him and slowly lifted her eyes. Their lips met.

21 APRIL, 1891.

EATIN' CROW,

AND

THE BEST MAN IN GAROTTE.

EATIN' CROW.

THE evening on which Charley Muirhead made his first appearance at Doolan's was a memorable one; the camp was in wonderful spirits. Whitman was said to have struck it rich. Garotte, therefore, might yet become popular in the larger world, and its evil reputation be removed. Besides, what Whitman had done anyone might do, for by common consent he was a "derned fool." Good-humour accordingly reigned at Doolan's, and the saloon was filled with an excited, hopeful crowd. Bill Bent, however, was anything but pleased; he generally was in a bad temper, and this evening, as Crocker remarked carelessly, he was "more ornery than ever." The rest seemed to pay no attention to the lanky, dark man with the narrow head, round, black eyes, and rasping voice. But Bent would croak: "Whitman's struck nothin'; thar ain't no gold in Garotte; it's all work and no dust." In this strain he went on, offending local sentiment and making everyone uncomfortable.

Muirhead's first appearance created a certain sensation. He was a fine upstanding fellow of six feet or over, well made, and good-looking. But Garotte had too much experience of life to be won by a stranger's handsome looks. Muirhead's fair mous-

tache and large blue eyes counted for little there. Crocker and others, masters in the art of judging men, noticed that his eyes were unsteady, and his manner, though genial, seemed hasty. Reggitt summed up their opinion in the phrase, "looks as if he'd bite off more'n he could chaw." Unconscious of the criticism, Muirhead talked, offered drinks, and made himself agreeable.

At length in answer to Bent's continued grumbling, Muirhead said pleasantly: "'Taint so bad as that in Garotte, is it? This bar don't look like poverty, and if I set up drinks for the crowd, it's because I'm glad to be in this camp."

"P'r'aps you found the last place you was in jes' a leetle too warm, eh?" was Bent's retort.

Muirhead's face flushed, and for a second he stood as if he had been struck. Then, while the crowd moved aside, he sprang towards Bent, exclaiming, "Take that back—right off! Take it back!"

"What?" asked Bent coolly, as if surprised; at the same time, however, retreating a pace or two, he slipped his right hand behind him.

Instantly Muirhead threw himself upon him, rushed him with what seemed demoniac strength to the open door and flung him away out on his back into the muddy ditch that served as a street. For a moment there was a hush of expectation, then Bent was seen to gather himself up painfully and move out of the square of light into the darkness. But Muirhead did not wait for this; hastily, with hot face and hands still working with excitement, he returned to the bar with:

"That's how I act. No one can jump me. No one,

by God!" and he glared round the room defiantly. Reggitt, Harrison, and some of the others looked at him as if on the point of retorting, but the cheerfulness was general, and Bent's grumbling before a stranger had irritated them almost as much as his unexpected cowardice. Muirhead's challenge was not taken up, therefore, though Harrison did remark, half sarcastically:

"That may be so. You jump them, I guess."

"Well, boys, let's have the drink," Charley Muirhead went on, his manner suddenly changing to that of friendly greeting, just as if he had not heard Harrison's words.

The men moved up to the bar and drank, and before the liquor was consumed, Charley's geniality, acting on the universal good humour, seemed to have done away with the discontent which his violence and Bent's cowardice had created. This was the greater tribute to his personal charm, as the refugees of Garotte usually hung together, and were inclined to resent promptly any insult offered to one of their number by a stranger. But in the present case harmony seemed to be completely re-established, and it would have taken a keener observer than Muirhead to have understood his own position and the general opinion. It was felt that the stranger had bluffed for all he was worth, and that Garotte had come out "at the little end of the horn."

A day or two later Charley Muirhead, walking about the camp, came upon Dave Crocker's claim, and offered to buy half of it and work as a partner, but the other would not sell; "the claim was worth nothin'; not good enough for two, anyhow;" and

there the matter would have ended, had not the young man proposed to work for a spell just to keep his hand in. By noon Crocker was won; nobody could resist Charley's hard work and laughing high spirits. Shortly afterwards the older man proposed to knock off; a day's work, he reckoned, had been done, and evidently considering it impossible to accept a stranger's labour without acknowledgment, he pressed Charley to come up to his shanty and eat. The simple meal was soon despatched, and Crocker, feeling the obvious deficiencies of his larder, produced a bottle of Bourbon, and the two began to drink. Glass succeeded glass, and at length Crocker's reserve seemed to thaw; his manner became almost easy, and he spoke half frankly.

"I guess you're strong," he remarked. "You threw Bent out of the saloon the other night like as if he was nothin'; strength's good, but 't ain't everythin'. I mean," he added, in answer to the other's questioning look, "Samson wouldn't have a show with a man quick on the draw who meant bizness. Bent didn't pan out worth a cent, and the boys didn't like him, but—them things don't happen often." So in his own way he tried to warn the man to whom he had taken a liking.

Charley felt that a warning was intended, for he replied decisively: "It don't matter. I guess he wanted to jump me, and I won't be jumped, not if Samson wanted to, and all the revolvers in Garotte were on me."

"Wall," Crocker went on quietly, but with a certain curiosity in his eyes, "that's all right, but I reckon you were mistaken. Bent didn't want to

rush ye; 'twas only his cussed way, and he'd had mighty bad luck. You might hev waited to see if he meant anythin', mightn't ye?" And he looked his listener in the face as he spoke.

"That's it," Charley replied, after a long pause, "that's just it. I couldn't wait, d'ye see!" and then continued hurriedly, as if driven to relieve himself by a full confession: "Maybe you don't *sabe*. It's plain enough, though I'd have to begin far back to make you understand. But I don't mind if you want to hear. I was raised in the East, in Rhode Island, and I guess I was liked by everybody. I never had trouble with any one, and I was a sort of favourite . . . . I fell in love with a girl, and as I hadn't much money, I came West to make some, as quick as I knew how. The first place I struck was Laramie—you don't know it? 'Twas a hard place; cowboys, liquor saloons, cursin' and swearin', poker and shootin' nearly every night. At the beginning I seemed to get along all right, and I liked the boys, and thought they liked me. One night a little Irishman was rough on me; first of all I didn't notice, thought he meant nothin', and then, all at once, I saw he meant it—and more.

"Well, I got a kind of scare—I don't know why—and I took what he said and did nothin'. Next day the boys sort of held off from me, didn't talk; thought me no account, I guess, and that little Irishman just rode me round the place with spurs on. I never kicked once. I thought I'd get the money—I had done well with the stock I had bought—and go back East and marry, and no one would be any the wiser. But the Irishman kept right on,

and first one and then another of the boys went for me, and I took it all. I just," and here his voice rose, and his manner became feverishly excited, "I just ate crow right along for months—and tried to look as if 'twas quail.

"One day I got a letter from home. She wanted me to hurry up and come back. She thought a lot of me, I could see; more than ever, because I had got along—I had written and told her my best news. And then, what had been hard grew impossible right off. I made up my mind to sell the stock and strike for new diggings. I couldn't stand it any longer—not after her letter. I sold out and cleared .... I ought to hev stayed in Laramie, p'r'aps, and gone for the Irishman, but I just couldn't. Everyone there was against me."

"I guess you oughter hev stayed. .... Besides, if you had wiped up the floor with that Irishman the boys would hev let up on you."

"P'r'aps so," Charley resumed, "but I was sick of the whole crowd. I sold off, and lit out. When I got on the new stage-coach, fifty miles from Laramie, and didn't know the driver or any one, I made up my mind to start fresh. Then and there I resolved that I had eaten all the crow I was going to eat; the others should eat crow now, and if there was any jumpin' to be done, I'd do it, whatever it cost. And so I went for Bent right off. I didn't want to wait. 'Here's more crow,' I thought, 'but I won't eat it; he shall, if I die for it,' and I just threw him out quick."

"I see," said Crocker, with a certain sympathy in his voice, "but you oughter hev waited. You

oughter make up to wait from this on, Charley. 'Tain't hard. You don't need to take anythin' and set under it. I'm not advisin' that, but it's stronger to wait before you go fer anyone. The boys," he added significantly, "don't like a man to bounce, and what they don't like is pretty hard to do."

"Damn the boys," exclaimed Charley vehemently, "they're all alike out here. I can't act different. If I waited, I might wait too long—too long, d'you *sabe?* I just can't trust myself," he added in a subdued tone.

"No," replied Crocker meditatively. "No, p'r'aps not. But see here, Charley, I kinder like you, and so I tell you, no one can bounce the crowd here in Garotte. They're the worst crowd you ever struck in your life. Garotte's known for hard cases. Why," he went on earnestly, as if he had suddenly become conscious of the fact, "the other night Reggitt and a lot came mighty near goin' fer you—and Harrison, Harrison took up what you said. You didn't notice, I guess; and p'r'aps 'twas well you didn't; but you hadn't much to spare. You won by the odd card.

"No one can bounce this camp. They've come from everywhere, and can only jes' get a livin' here—no more. And when luck's bad they're"—and he paused as if no adjective were strong enough. "If a man was steel, and the best and quickest on the draw ever seen, I guess they'd bury him if he played your way."

"Then they may bury me," retorted Charley bitterly, "but I've eaten my share of crow. I ain't

goin' to eat any more. Can't go East now with the taste of it in my mouth. I'd rather they buried me."

And they did bury him—about a fortnight after.

JULY, 1892.

THE BEST MAN IN GAROTTE.

LAWYER RABLAY had come from nobody knew where. He was a small man, almost as round as a billiard ball. His body was round, his head was round; his blue eyes and even his mouth and chin were round; his nose was a perky snub; he was florid and prematurely bald—a picture of good-humour. And yet he was a power in Garotte. When he came to the camp, a row was the only form of recreation known to the miners. A "fuss" took men out of themselves, and was accordingly hailed as an amusement; besides, it afforded a subject of conversation. But after Lawyer Rablay's arrival fights became comparatively infrequent. Would-be students of human nature declared at first that his flow of spirits was merely animal, and that his wit was thin; but even these envious ones had to admit later that his wit told, and that his good-humour was catching.

Crocker and Harrison had nearly got to loggerheads one night for no reason apparently, save that each had a high reputation for courage, and neither could find a worthier antagonist. In the nick of time Rablay appeared; he seemed to understand the situation at a glance, and broke in:

"See here, boys. I'll settle this. They're dis-

putin'—I know they are. Want to decide with bullets whether 'Frisco or Denver's the finest city. 'Frisco's bigger and older, says Crocker; Harrison maintains Denver's better laid out. Crocker replies in his quiet way that 'Frisco ain't dead yet." Good temper being now re-established, Rablay went on: "I'll decide this matter right off. Crocker and Harrison shall set up drinks for the crowd till we're all laid out. And I'll tell a story," and he began a tale which cannot be retold here, but which delighted the boys as much by its salaciousness as by its vivacity.

Lawyer Rablay was to Garotte what novels, theatres, churches, concerts are to more favoured cities; in fact, for some six months, he and his stories constituted the chief humanizing influence in the camp. Deputations were often despatched from Doolan's to bring Rablay to the bar. The miners got up "cases" in order to give him work. More than once both parties in a dispute, real or imaginary, engaged him, despite his protestations, as attorney, and afterwards the boys insisted that, being advocate for both sides, he was well fitted to decide the issue as judge. He had not been a month in Garotte before he was christened Judge, and every question, whether of claim-boundaries, the suitability of a nickname, or the value of "dust," was submitted for his decision. It cannot be asserted that his enviable position was due either to perfect impartiality or to infallible wisdom. But everyone knew that his judgments would be informed by shrewd sense and good-humour, and would be followed by a story, and woe betide the disputant

whose perversity deferred that pleasure. So Garotte became a sort of theocracy, with Judge Rablay as ruler. And yet he was, perhaps, the only man in the community whose courage had never been tested or even considered.

One afternoon a man came to Garotte, who had a widespread reputation. His name was Bill Hitchcock. A marvellous shot, a first-rate poker-player, a good rider—these virtues were outweighed by his desperate temper. Though not more than five-and-twenty years of age his courage and ferocity had made him a marked man. He was said to have killed half-a-dozen men; and it was known that he had generally provoked his victims. No one could imagine why he had come to Garotte, but he had not been half an hour in the place before he was recognized. It was difficult to forget him, once seen. He was tall and broad-shouldered; his face long, with well-cut features; a brown moustache drooped negligently over his mouth; his heavy eyelids were usually half-closed, but when in moments of excitement they were suddenly updrawn, one was startled by a naked hardness of grey-green eyes.

Hitchcock spent the whole afternoon in Doolan's, scarcely speaking a word. As night drew down, the throng of miners increased. Luck had been bad for weeks; the camp was in a state of savage ill-humour. Not a few came to the saloon that night intending to show, if an opportunity offered, that neither Hitchcock nor anyone else on earth could scare them. As minute after minute passed the tension increased. Yet Hitchcock stood in the midst of them, drinking and smoking in silence, seemingly unconcerned.

Presently the Judge came in with a smile on his round face and shot off a merry remark. But the quip didn't take as it should have done. He was received with quiet nods and not with smiles and loud greetings as usual. Nothing daunted, he made his way to the bar, and, standing next to Hitchcock, called for a drink.

"Come, Doolan, a Bourbon; our only monarch!"

Beyond a smile from Doolan the remark elicited no applause. Astonished, the Judge looked about him; never in his experience had the camp been in that temper. But still he had conquered too often to doubt his powers now. Again and again he tried to break the spell—in vain. As a last resort he resolved to use his infallible recipe against ill-temper.

"Boys! I've just come in to tell you one little story; then I'll have to go."

From force of habit the crowd drew towards him, and faces relaxed. Cheered by this he picked up his glass from the bar and turned towards his audience. Unluckily, as he moved, his right arm brushed against Hitchcock, who was looking at him with half-opened eyes. The next moment Hitchcock had picked up his glass and dashed it in the Judge's face. Startled, confounded by the unexpected suddenness of the attack, Rablay backed two or three paces, and, blinded by the rush of blood from his forehead, drew out his handkerchief. No one stirred. It was part of the unwritten law in Garotte to let every man in such circumstances play his game as he pleased. For a moment or two the Judge mopped his face, and then he started towards

his assailant with his round face puckered up and out-thrust hands. He had scarcely moved, however, when Hitchcock levelled a long Navy Colt against his breast:

"Git back, you —— — — ——."

The Judge stopped. He was unarmed but not cowed. All of a sudden those wary, long eyes of Hitchcock took in the fact that a score of revolvers covered him.

With lazy deliberation Dave Crocker moved out of the throng towards the combatants, and standing between them, with his revolver pointing to the ground, said sympathetically:

"Jedge, we're sorry you've been jumped, here in Garotte. Now, what would you like?"

"A fair fight," replied Rablay, beginning again to use his handkerchief.

"Wall," Crocker went on, after a pause for thought. "A square fight's good but hard to get. This man," and his head made a motion towards Hitchcock as he spoke, "is one of the best shots there is, and I reckon you're not as good at shootin' as at—other things." Again he paused to think, and then continued with the same deliberate air of careful reflection, "We all cotton to you, Jedge; you know that. Suppose you pick a man who kin shoot, and leave it to him. That'd be fair, an' you kin jes' choose any of us, or one after the other. We're all willin'."

"No," replied the Judge, taking away the handkerchief, and showing a jagged, red line on his forehead. "No! he struck *me*. I don't want anyone to help me, or take my place."

"That's right," said Crocker, approvingly; "that's right, Jedge, we all like that, but 'tain't square, and this camp means to hev it square. You bet!" And, in the difficult circumstances, he looked round for the approval which was manifest on every one of the serious faces. Again he began: "I guess, Jedge, you'd better take my plan, 'twould be surer. No! Wall, suppose I take two six-shooters, one loaded, the other empty, and put them under a *capote* on the table in the next room. You could both go in and draw for weapons; that'd be square, I reckon?" and he waited for the Judge's reply.

"Yes," replied Rablay, "that'd be fair. I agree to that."

"Hell!" exclaimed Hitchcock, "I don't. If he wants to fight, I'm here; but I ain't goin' to take a hand in no sich derned game—with the cards stocked agen me."

"Ain't you?" retorted Crocker, facing him, and beginning slowly. "I reckon *you'll* play any game we say. *See!* any damned game *we* like. D'ye understand?"

As no response was forthcoming to this defiance, he went into the other room to arrange the preliminaries of the duel. A few moments passed in silence, and then he came back through the lane of men to the two combatants.

"Jedge," he began, "the six-shooters are there, all ready. Would you like to hev first draw, or throw for it with him?" contemptuously indicating Hitchcock with a movement of his head as he concluded.

"Let us throw," replied Rablay, quietly.

In silence the three dice and the box were placed

by Doolan on the bar. In response to Crocker's gesture the Judge took up the box and rolled out two fives and a three—thirteen. Everyone felt that he had lost the draw, but his face did not change any more than that of his adversary. In silence Hitchcock replaced the dice in the box and threw a three, a four, and a two—nine; he put down the box emphatically.

"Wall," Crocker decided impassively, "I guess that gives you the draw, Jedge; we throw fer high in Garotte—sometimes," he went on, turning as if to explain to Hitchcock, but with insult in his voice, and then, "After you, Jedge!"

Rablay passed through the crowd into the next room. There, on a table, was a small heap covered with a cloak. Silently the men pressed round, leaving Crocker between the two adversaries in the full light of the swinging lamp.

"Now, Jedge," said Crocker, with a motion towards the table.

"No!" returned the Judge, with white, fixed face, "he won; let him draw first. I only want a square deal."

A low hum of surprise went round the room. Garotte was more than satisfied with its champion. Crocker looked at Hitchcock, and said:

"It's your draw, then." The words were careless, but the tone and face spoke clearly enough.

A quick glance round the room and Hitchcock saw that he was trapped. These men would show him no mercy. At once the wild beast in him appeared. He stepped to the table, put his hand under the cloak, drew out a revolver, dropped

it, pointing towards Rablay's face, and pulled the trigger. A sharp click. That revolver, at any rate, was unloaded. Quick as thought Crocker stepped between Hitchcock and the table. Then he said:

"It's your turn now, Jedge!"

As he spoke a sound, half of relief and half of content came from the throats of the onlookers. The Judge did not move. He had not quivered when the revolver was levelled within a foot of his head; he did not appear to have seen it. With set eyes and pale face, and the jagged wound on his forehead whence the blood still trickled, he had waited, and now he did not seem to hear. Again Crocker spoke:

"Come, Jedge, it's your turn."

The sharp, loud words seemed to break the spell which had paralyzed the man. He moved to the table, and slowly drew the revolver from under the cloak. His hesitation was too much for the crowd.

"Throw it through him, Jedge! Now's your chance. Wade in, Jedge!"

The desperate ferocity of the curt phrases seemed to move him. He raised the revolver. Then came in tones of triumph:

"I'll bet high on the Jedge!"

He dropped the revolver on the floor, and fled from the room.

The first feeling of the crowd of men was utter astonishment, but in a moment or two this gave place to half-contemptuous sympathy. What expression this sentiment would have found it is impossible to say, for just then Bill Hitchcock observed with a sneer:

"As he's run, I may as well walk;" and he stepped towards the bar-room.

Instantly Crocker threw himself in front of him with his face on fire.

"Walk—will ye?" he burst out, the long-repressed rage flaming up—"walk! when you've jumped the best man in Garotte—walk! No, by God, you'll crawl, d'ye hear? crawl—right out of this camp, right now!" and he dropped his revolver on Hitchcock's breast.

Then came a wild chorus of shouts.

"That's right! That's the talk! Crawl, will ye! Down on yer hands and knees. Crawl, damn ye! Crawl!" and a score of revolvers covered the stranger.

For a moment he stood defiant, looking his assailants in the eyes. His face seemed to have grown thinner, and his moustache twitched with the snarling movement of a brute at bay. Then he was tripped up and thrown forwards amid a storm of, "Crawl, damn ye—crawl!" And so Hitchcock crawled, on hands and knees, out of Doolan's.

Lawyer Rablay, too, was never afterwards seen in Garotte. Men said his nerves had "give out."

JULY, 1892.

GULMORE, THE BOSS.

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THE habits of the Gulmore household were in some respects primitive. Though it was not yet seven o'clock two negro girls were clearing away the breakfast things under the minute supervision of their mistress, an angular, sharp-faced woman with a reedy voice, and nervously abrupt movements. Near the table sat a girl of nineteen absorbed in a book. In an easy-chair by the open bay-window a man with a cigar in his mouth was reading a newspaper. Jonathan Byrne Gulmore, as he always signed himself, was about fifty years of age; his heavy frame was muscular, and the coarse dark hair and swarthy skin showed vigorous health. There was both obstinacy and combativeness in his face with its cocked nose, low irregular forehead, thick eyebrows, and square jaw, but the deep-set grey eyes gleamed at times with humorous comprehension, and the usual expression of the countenance was far from ill-natured. As he laid the paper on his knees and looked up, he drew the eye. His size and strength seemed to be the physical equivalents of an extraordinary power of character and will. When Mrs. Gulmore followed the servants out of the room the girl rose from her chair and went towards the door. She was stopped by her father's voice:

"Ida, I want a talk with you. You'll be able to go to your books afterwards; I won't keep you long." She sat down again and laid her book on the table, while Mr. Gulmore continued:

"The election's next Monday week, and I've no time to lose." A moment's silence, and he let his question fall casually:

"You know this—Professor Roberts—don't you? He was at the University when you were there—eh?" The girl flushed slightly as she assented.

"They say he's smart, an' he ken talk. I heard him the other night; but I'd like to know what you think. Your judgment 's generally worth havin'."

Forced to reply without time for reflection, Miss Gulmore said as little as possible with a great show of frankness:

"Oh, yes; he's smart, and knows Greek and Latin and German, and a great many things. The senior students used to say he knew more than all the other professors put together, and he—he thinks so too, I imagine," and she laughed intentionally, for, on hearing her own strained laughter, she blushed, and then stood up out of a nervous desire to conceal her embarrassment. But her father was looking away from her at the glowing end of his cigar; and, as she resumed her seat, he went on:

"I'm glad you seem to take no stock in him, Ida, for he's makin' himself unpleasant. I'll have to give him a lesson, I reckon, not in Greek or Latin or them things—I never had nothin' taught me beyond the 'Fourth Reader,' in old Vermont, and I've forgotten some of what I learned then—but in election work an' business I guess I ken give

Professor Roberts points, fifty in a hundred, every time. Did you know he's always around with Lawyer Hutchin's?"

"Is he? That's because of May—May Hutchings. Oh, she deserves him;" the girl spoke with sarcastic bitterness, "she gave herself trouble enough to get him. It was just sickening the way she acted, blushing every time he spoke to her, and looking up at him as if he were everything. Some people have no pride in them."

Her father listened impassively, and, after a pause, began his explanation:

"Wall, Ida, anyway he means to help Hutchin's in this city election. 'Tain't the first time Hutchin's has run for mayor on the Democratic ticket and come out at the little end of the horn, and I propose to whip him again. But this Professor's runnin' him on a new track, and I want some points about *him*. It's like this. At the Democratic meetin' the other night, the Professor spoke, and spoke well. What he said was popcorn; but it took with the Mugwumps—them that think themselves too high-falutin' to work with either party, jest as if organization was no good, an' a mob was as strong as an army. Wall, he talked for an hour about purity an' patriotism, and when he had warmed 'em up he went bald-headed for me. He told 'em—you ken read it all in the 'Tribune'—that this town was run by a ring, an' not run honestly; contracts were given only to members of the Republican party; all appointments were made by the ring, and never accordin' to ability—as if sich a ring could last ten years. He ended up

by saying, though he was a Republican, as his father is, he intended to vote Democratic—he's domiciled here—as a protest against the impure and corrupt Boss-system which was disgracin' American political life. 'Twas baby talk. But it's like this. The buildin' of the branch line South has brought a lot of Irish here—they're all Democrats—and there's quite a number of Mugwumps, an' if this Professor goes about workin' them all up—what with the flannel-mouths and the rest—it might be a close finish. I'm sure to win, but if I could get some information about him, it would help me. His father's all right. We've got him down to a fine point. Prentiss, the man I made editor of the 'Herald,' knows him well; ken tell us why he left Kaintucky to come West. But I want to know somethin' about the Professor, jest to teach him to mind his own business, and leave other folk to attend to theirs. Ken you help me? Is he popular with the students and professors?"

She thought intently, while the colour rose in her cheeks; she was eager to help.

"With the students, yes. There's nothing to be done there. The professors—I don't think they like him much; he is too clever. When he came into the class-room and talked Latin to Johnson, the Professor of Latin, and Johnson could only stammer out a word or two, I guess he didn't make a friend;" and the girl laughed at the recollection.

"I don't know anything else that could be brought against him. They say he is an Atheist. Would that be any use? He gave a lecture on 'Culture as a Creed' about three months ago which made

some folk mad. The other professors are Christians and, of course, all the preachers took it up. He compared Buddha with Christ, and said—oh, I remember!—that Shakespeare was the Old Testament of the English-speaking peoples. That caused some talk; they all believe in the Bible. He said, too, that 'Shakespeare was inspired in a far higher sense than St. Paul, who was thin and hard, a logic-loving bigot.' And President Campbell—he's a Presbyterian—preached the Sunday afterwards upon St. Paul as the great missionary of Protestantism. I don't think the professors like him, but I don't know that they can do anything, for all the students, the senior ones, at least, are with him," and the girl paused, and tried to find out from her father's face whether what she had said was likely to be of service.

"Wall! I don't go much on them things myself, but I guess somethin' ken be done. I'll see Prentiss about it: send him to interview this President Campbell, and wake him up to a sense of his duty. This is a Christian country, I reckon," the grey eyes twinkled, "and those who teach the young should teach them Christian principles, or else—get out. I guess it ken be worked. The University's a State institution. You don't mind if he's fired out, do you?" And the searching eyes probed her with a glance.

"Oh! I don't mind," she said quickly, in a would-be careless tone, rising and going towards him, "it has nothing to do with me. He belongs to May Hutchings—let her help him, if she can. I think you're quite right to give him a lesson—he

needs one badly. What right has he to come and attack you?" She had passed to her father's side, and was leaning against his shoulder. Those grey eyes saw more than she cared to reveal; they made her uncomfortable.

"Then I understand it's like this. You want him to get a real lesson? Is that it? You ken talk straight to me, Ida. I'm with you every time. You know that."

The feminine instinct of concealment worked in her, but she knew this father of hers would have plain speech, and some hidden feeling forced her violent temper to an outburst of curiously mingled hatred of the Professor and exultation in her power of injuring him.

"Why, father, it's all the same to me. I've no interest in it, except to help you. You know I never said a word against him till you asked me. But he has no business to come down and attack *you*," and the voice grew shrill. "It's shameful of him. If he were a man he'd never do it. Yes—give him a *real* lesson; teach him that those he despises are stronger than he is. Let him lose his place and be thrown out of work, then we'll see if May Hutchings," and she laughed, "will go and help him. We'll see who is——"

Her father interrupted her in the middle of a tirade which would have been complete self-revelation; but it is not to be presumed that he did this out of a delicate regard for his daughter's feelings. He had got the information he wanted.

"That's all right, Ida. I guess he'll get the lesson. You ken count on me. You've put me on the right

track, I believe. I knew if anyone could help me, you'd be able to. Nobody knows what's in you better'n I do. You're smarter'n anyone I know, and I know a few who think they're real smart——"

In this vein he continued soothing his daughter's pride, and yet speaking in an even, impersonal tone, as if merely stating facts.

"Now I've got to go. Prentiss'll be waiting for me at the office."

While driving to the office, Mr. Gulmore's thoughts, at first, were with his daughter. "I don't know why, but I suspicioned that. That's why she left the University before graduatin', an' talked of goin' East, and makin' a name for herself on the stage. That Professor's foolish. Ida's smart and pretty, and she'll have a heap of money some day. The ring has a few contracts on hand still—he's a fool. How she talked: she remembered all that lecture—every word; but she's young yet. She'd have given herself away if I hadn't stopped her. I don't like anyone to do that; it's weak. But she means business every time, just as I do; she means him to be fired right out, and then she'd probably go and cry over him, and want me to put him back again. But no. I guess not. That's not the way I work. I'd be willin' for him to stay away, and leave me alone, but as she wants him punished, he shall be, and she mustn't interfere at the end. It'll do her good to find out that things can't both be done and undone, if she's that sort. But p'r'aps she won't want to undo them. When their pride's hurt women are mighty hard—harder than men by far. . . I wonder how long it'll take to get this

Campbell to move. I must start right in; I hain't got much time."

As soon as her father left her, Miss Ida hurried to her own room, in order to recover from her agitation, and to remove all traces of it. She was an only child, and had accordingly a sense of her own importance, which happened to be uncorrected by physical deficiencies. Not that she was astonishingly beautiful, but she was tall and just good-looking enough to allow her to consider herself a beauty. Her chief attraction was her form, which, if somewhat flat-chested, had a feline flexibility rarer and more seductive than she imagined. She was content to believe that nature had fashioned her to play the part in life which, she knew, was hers of right. Her name, even, was most appropriate—dignified. Ida should be queen-like, stately; the oval of her face should be long, and not round, and her complexion should be pallid; colour in the cheeks made one look common. Her dark hair, too, pleased her; everything, in fact, save her eyes; they were of a nameless, agate-like hue, and she would have preferred them to be violet. That would have given her face the charm of unexpectedness, which she acknowledged was in itself a distinction. And Miss Ida loved everything that conduced to distinction, everything that flattered her pride with a sense of her own superiority. It seemed as if her mother's narrowness of nature had confined and shot, so to speak, all the passions and powers of the father into this one characteristic of the daughter. She did not like to remember that her father had risen to influence and riches by his own

ability. She felt that the Hutchingses and the society to which they belonged, persons who had been well educated for generations, and who had always been more or less well off, formed a higher class. It was the longing to become one of them that had impelled her to study with might and main. Even in her school-days she had recognized that this was the road to social eminence. The struggle had been arduous. In the Puritan surroundings of middle-class life her want of religious training and belief had almost made a pariah of the proud, high-tempered girl, and when as a clever student of the University and a daughter of one of the richest and most powerful men in the State, she came into a circle that cared as little about Christian dogmas as she did, she attributed the comparative coolness with which her companions treated her, to her father's want of education, rather than to the true cause, her own domineering temper. As she had hated her childish playmates, who, instructed by their mothers, held aloof from the infidel, so she had grown to detest the associates of her girlhood, whose parents seemed, by virtue of manners and education, superior to hers. The aversion was acrid with envy, and had fastened from the beginning on her competitor as a student and her rival in beauty, Miss May Hutchings. Her animosity was intensified by the fact that, when they entered the Sophomore class together, Miss May had made her acquaintance, had tried to become friends with her, and then, for some inscrutable reason, had drawn coldly away. By dint of working twice as hard as May, Ida had managed to outstrip her, and to begin the

Junior year as the first of the class; but all the while she was conscious that her success was due to labour, and not to a larger intelligence. And with the coming of the new professor of Greek, this superiority, her one consolation, was called in question.

Professor Roberts had brought about a revolution in the University. He was young and passionately devoted to his work; had won his Doctor's degree at Berlin *summa cum laude*, and his pupils soon felt that he represented a standard of knowledge higher than they had hitherto imagined as attainable, and yet one which, he insisted, was common in the older civilization of Europe. It was this nettling comparison which first aroused the ardour of his scholars. In less than a year they passed from the level of youths in a high school to that of University students. And on the best heads his influence was magical; his liking for general ideas seemed to them to open broad avenues into unknown worlds.

While defending one day the love of the Greek for abstract thought, it occurred to him to quote Da Vinci's saying that that art was the highest which was least dependent upon bodily labour. "This," he went on, "is one of those *aperçus*, purely Greek in spirit, which anticipate modern scientific theories. For now we classify the arts as we classify the forms of life, putting architecture lowest as the art which deals with the simplest ideas, and then advancing through sculpture, painting, and music to literature, the divinest of all the arts, which includes in itself the effects attained by each of the others. For literature can give us the sense of awe and sublimity which is the effect proper to architecture. It can

move us with the vigour and beauty of the human form almost as completely as sculpture, and convey to us in part, at least, the glory of light and shade and colour which is the province of painting. Nor is the melody which belongs to music unknown to poetry, nor the cries of passion and fear, nor the sobs that provoke pity. On the other hand, none of these arts can render, however imperfectly, the 'thoughts that wander through Eternity,' and the sense of the sequence and transitoriness of Time, which are the effects proper to literature."

Such speculations as these fascinated his youthful listeners; he appeared to them to be extraordinary, perfect, experience not having taught them the weakness of the thinker in practical life.

Miss Hutchings was the first of the senior students to yield herself to the new influence. In the beginning Miss Gulmore was not attracted by Professor Roberts; she thought him insignificant physically; he was neat of dress too, and ingenuously eager in manner—all of which conflicted with her ideal of manhood. It was but slowly that she awoke to a consciousness of his merits, and her awakening was due perhaps as much to jealousy of May Hutchings as to the conviction that with Professor Roberts for a husband she would realize her social ambitions. Suddenly she became aware that May was passing her in knowledge of Greek, and was thus winning the notice of the man she had begun to look upon as worthy of her own choice. Ida at once addressed herself to the struggle with all the energy of her nature, but at first without success. It was evident

that May was working as she had never worked before, for as the weeks flew by she seemed to increase her advantage. During this period Ida Gulmore's pride suffered tortures; day by day she understood more clearly that the prize of her life was slipping out of reach. In mind and soul now she realized Roberts' daring and charm. With the intensified perceptions of a jealous woman, she sometimes feared that he sympathized with her rival. But he had not yet declared himself; of that she was sure, and her conceit enabled her to hope desperately. A moment arrived when her hatred of May was sweetened by contempt. For some reason or other May was neglecting her work; when spoken to by the Professor her colour came and went, and a shyness, visible to all, wrapped her in confusion. Ida felt that there was no time to be lost, and increased her exertions. As she thought of her position she determined first to surpass her competitor, and then in some way or other to bring the Professor to speech. But, alas! for her plans. One morning she demonstrated her superiority with cruel clearness, only to find that Roberts, self-absorbed, did not notice her. He seemed to have lost the vivid interest in the work which aforetime had characterized him, and the happiness of the man was only less tell-tale than the pretty contentment and demure approval of all he said which May scarcely tried to conceal. Wild with fear and temper, Ida resolved to know the truth.

One morning when the others left the room she waited, busying herself apparently with some notes, till the Professor returned, as she knew he would, in

time to receive the next class. While gathering up her books, she asked abruptly:

"I suppose I should congratulate you, Professor?"

"I don't think I understand you."

"Yes, you do. Why lie? You are engaged to May Hutchings," and the girl looked at him with flaming eyes.

"I don't know why you should ask me, or why I should answer, but we have no motive for concealment—yes, I am."

His manner was almost harsh; his reverence for May and her affection had been wounded by the insolent challenge, but before he finished speaking his manner became considerate. He was quick to feel the pain of others and shrank from adding to it—these, indeed, were the two chief articles of the unformulated creed which directed his actions. His optimism was of youth and superficial, but the sense of the brotherhood of human suffering touched his heart in a way that made compassion and tenderness appear to him to be the highest and simplest of duties. It was Ida's temper that answered his avowal. Still staring at him she burst into loud laughter, and as he turned away her tuneless mirth grew shriller and shriller till it became hysterical. A frightened effort to regain her self-control, and her voice broke in something like a sob, while tears trembled on her lashes. The Professor's head was bent over his desk and he saw nothing. Ida dashed the tears from her eyes ostentatiously, and walked with shaking limbs out of the room. She would have liked to laugh again scornfully before closing the door but she dared not trust her nerves. From that moment she

tried to hate Professor Roberts as she hated May Hutchings, for her disappointment had been very sore, and the hurt to her pride smarted like a burn. On returning home, she told her father that she had taken her name off the books of the University; she meant to be an actress, and a degree could be of no use to her in her new career. Her father did not oppose her openly; he was content to postpone any decisive step, and in a few days she seemed to have abandoned her project. But time brought no mitigation of her spite. She was tenacious by nature, and her jealous rage came back upon her in wild fits. To be outdone by May Hutchings was intolerable. Besides, the rivalry and triumphs of the classroom had been as the salt of life to her; now she had nothing to do, nothing to occupy her affections or give object to her feverish ambition. And the void of her life she laid to the charge of Roberts. So when the time came and the temptation, she struck as those strike who suffer.

Alone in her room, she justified to herself what she had done. She thought with pleasure of Professor Roberts' approaching defeat and punishment. "He deserves it, and more! He knows why I left the University; drew myself away from him for ever. What does he care for my suffering? He can't leave me in peace. I wasn't good enough for him, and my father isn't honest enough. Oh, that I were a man! I'd teach him that it was dangerous to insult the wretched.

"How I was mistaken in him! He has no delicacy, no true manliness of character. I'm glad he has thrown down the challenge. Father may not be well-educated nor refined, but he's strong. Professor

Roberts shall find out what it means to attack *us*. I hope he'll be turned out of the University; I hope he will. Let me think. I have a copy of that lecture of his; perhaps there's something in it stronger than I remembered. At any rate, the report will be proof."

She searched hurriedly, and soon found the newspaper account she wanted. Glancing down the column with feverish eagerness, she burst out: "Here it is; this will do. I knew there was something more."

". . . Thus the great ones contribute, each his part, towards the humanization of man. Christ and Buddha are our teachers, but so also, and in no lower degree, are Plato, Dante, Goethe, and Shakespeare. . . .

"But strange to say, the *Divina Commedia* seems to us moderns more remote than the speculations of Plato. For the modern world is founded upon science, and may be said to begin with the experimental philosophy of Bacon. The thoughts of Plato, the 'fair humanities' of Greek religion, are nearer to the scientific spirit than the untutored imaginings of Christ. The world to-day seeks its rule of life in exact knowledge of man and his surroundings; its teachers, high-priests in the temple of Truth, are the Darwins, the Bunsens, the Pasteurs. In the place of God we see Law, and the old concept of rewards and punishments has been re-stated as 'the survival of the fittest.' If, on the other hand, you need emotions, and the inspiration of concrete teaching, you must go to Balzac, to Turgenief, and to Ibsen. . . ."

"I think that'll do," said the girl half-aloud as she marked the above passages, and then sent the paper by a servant to her father's office. "The worst of it is, he'll find another place easily; but, at

any rate, he'll have to leave this State. . . . How well I remember that lecture. I thought no one had ever talked like that before. But the people disliked it, and even those who stayed to the end said they wouldn't have come had they known that a professor could speak against Christianity. How mad they made me then! I wouldn't listen to them, and now—now he's with May Hutchings, perhaps laughing at me with her. Or, if he's not so base as that, he's accusing my father of dishonesty, and I mean to defend him. But if, ah, if——" and the girl rose to her feet suddenly, with paleing face.

THE house of Lawyer Hutchings was commodious and comfortable. It was only two storeys high, and its breadth made it appear squat; it was solidly built of rough, brown stone, and a large wooden verandah gave shade and a lounging-place in front. It stood in its own grounds on the outskirts of the town, not far from Mr. Gulmore's, but it lacked the towers and greenhouse, the brick stables, and black iron gates, which made Mr. Gulmore's residence an object of public admiration. It had, indeed, a careless, home-like air, as of a building that disdains show, standing sturdily upon a consciousness of utility and worth. The study of the master lay at the back. It was a room of medium size, with two French windows, which gave upon an orchard of peach and apple-trees where lush grass hid the fallen fruit. The furniture was plain and serviceable. A few prints on the wall and a wainscoting of books showed the owner's tastes.

In this room one morning Lawyer Hutchings and Professor Roberts sat talking. The lawyer was sparely built and tall, of sympathetic appearance. The features of the face were refined and fairly regular, the blue eyes pleasing, the high forehead intelligent-looking. Yet—whether it was the querulous horizontal lines above the brows, or the frequent, graceful gestures of the hands—Mr. Hutchings left on one an impression of weakness, and, somehow or other, his precise way of speaking suggested intellectual narrowness. It was understood, however, that he had passed through Harvard with honours, and had done well in the law-course. It is, therefore, not to be wondered at that when he went West, he went with the idea that that was the shortest way to Washington. Yet he had had but a moderate degree of success; he was too thoroughly grounded in his work not to get a good practice, but he was not the first in his profession. He had been outdone by men who fought their cases, and his popularity was due to affable manners, and not to admiration of his power or talents. His obvious good nature had got with years a tinge of discontent; life had been to him one long disappointment.

A glance at Professor Roberts showed him to be a different sort of man, though perhaps harder to read. Square shoulders and attenuated figure—a mixture of energy and nervous force without muscular strength; a tyrannous forehead overshadowing lambent hazel eyes; a cordial frankness of manner with a student's tricks of gesture, his nervous fingers emphasizing his words.

Their talk was of an article assailing the Professor that had appeared that morning in "The Republican Herald."

"I don't like it," Mr. Hutchings was saying. "It's inspired by Gulmore, and he always means what he says—and something more."

"Except the suggestion that my father had certain good, or rather bad, reasons for leaving Kentucky, it seems to me merely spiteful. It's very vilely written."

"He only begins with your father. Then he wonders what the real motives are which induce you to change your political creed. But the affectation of fairness is the danger signal. One can't imagine Gulmore hesitating to assert what he has heard, that you have no religious principles. Coming from him, that means a declaration of war; he'll attack you without scruple—persistently. It's well known that he cares nothing for religion—even his wife's a Unitarian. What he's aiming at, I don't know, but he's sure to do you harm. He has done me harm, and yet he never gave me such a warning. He only went for me when I ran for office. As soon as the elections were over, he left me in peace. He's eminently practical, and rather good-natured. There's no small vicious malice or hate in him; but he's overbearing and loves a fight. Is it worth your while to make an enemy of him? We're sure to be beaten."

"Of course it isn't worth my while in that sense, but it's my duty, I think, as you think it yours. Besides, I've never attacked Mr. Gulmore—I've criticised the system, and avoided personalities."

The inflexible attitude of the Professor did not

impose on the worldly-wise lawyer. Mr. Hutchings felt that rigid principles were not helpful in life, but he did not like to put this frankly. He said:

"He won't take it in that way. He is the system; when you criticise it, you criticise him. Everyone will so understand it. He makes all the appointments, from mayor down to the boy who sweeps out an office; every contract is given to him or his appointees; that's how he has made his fortune. Why, he beat me the second time I ran for District Court Judge, by getting an Irishman, the Chairman of my Committee, to desert me at the last moment. He afterwards got Patrick Byrne elected a Justice of the Peace, a man who knows no law and can scarcely sign his own name."

"How disgraceful! And you would have me sit down quietly under the despotism of Mr. Gulmore? And such a despotism! It cost the city half a million dollars to pave the streets, and I can prove that the work could have been done as well for half the sum. But why do you say we're sure to be beaten? I thought you——"

"Yes," Mr. Hutchings interrupted, "I said that this railway extension gives us a chance. All the workmen are Irishmen, Democrats to a man, who'll vote and vote straight, and that has been our weak point. You can't get one-half the better classes to go to the polls. The negroes all vote, too, and vote Republican—that has been Gulmore's strength. Now I've got the Irishmen against his negroes I may win. But what I feel is that even if I do get to be Mayor, you'll suffer for it more than I shall gain by your help. Do you see? And now that I'm employed by the Union Pacific I don't care much

for city politics. I'd almost prefer to give up the candidature. May'll suffer, too. I think you ought to consider the matter before going any further."

"This is not the time for consideration. Like you I am trying to put an end to a corrupt tyranny. I work and shall vote against a venal and degrading system. May and I will bear what we must. She wouldn't have me run away from such adversaries. Fancy being governed by the most ignorant, led on by the most dishonest! It's incomprehensible to me how such a paradoxical infamy can exist."

"I think it'll become comprehensible to you before this election's over. I've done my best for years to alter it, and so far I've not been very successful. You don't seem to understand that where parties are almost equal in strength, a man who'll spend money is sure to win. It has paid Gulmore to organize the Republican party in this city; he has made it pay him and all those who hold office by and through him. 'To the victors, the spoils.' Those who have done the spoiling are able to pay more than the spoiled—that's all."

"Yes, but in this case the spoilers are a handful, while the spoiled are the vast majority. Why should it be impossible to convince the majority that they're being robbed?"

"Because ideas can't get into the heads of negroes, nor yet into the heads of illiterate Irishmen. You'll find, too, that five Americans out of every ten take no interest in ordinary politics, and the five who do are of the lowest class—a Boss is their natural master. Our party politics, my friend, resembles a game of faro—the card that happens to be in the box

against the same card outside—and the banker holding the box usually manages to win. Let me once get power and Gulmore'll find his labour unremunerative. If it hadn't been for him I'd have been in Congress long ago. But now I'll have to leave you. Talk it over with May and—you see that Gulmore challenges you to prove the corruption or else withdraw the imputation? What do you mean to do?"

"I'll prove it, of course. Long before I spoke I had gone into that paving contract; it was clearly a fraud."

"Well, I'd think, if I were you, before I acted, though you're a great help to me; your last speech was very powerful."

"Unfortunately I'm no speaker, but I'll do as well as I can, and you may rely on me to go on to the end. The rich at least must be forced to refrain from robbing the poor.... That malicious sneer at my father hurts me. It can only mean that he owed money in Kentucky. He was always careless in money matters, too careless, but he's very generous at heart. I owe him everything. I'll find out about it at once, and if it is as I fear, the debt shall be paid. That'll be one good result of Mr. Gulmore's malice. As for me, let him do his worst. At any rate I'm forewarned."

"A poor satisfaction in case—but here's May, and I must go. I've stayed too long already. You should look through our ticket; it's strong, the men are all good, I think—anyway, they're the best we can get. Teach him to be careful, May; he's too bold."

"I will, father," replied a clear, girlish voice; "it's mother who spoils him," and then, as the door shut, she moved to her lover, and holding out both her

hands, with a little air of dignity, added, "He tries to spoil *me*. But, dear, what's the matter? You seem annoyed."

"It's nothing. An article in that paper strikes at my father, and hurts me; but it can be made right, and to look at you is a cure for pain."

"Let me read it—no, please! I want to help you, and how can I do that if I don't know what pains you?" The girl took the "Herald" and sat down to read it.

May Hutchings was more than good-looking, were it only by reason of a complexion such as is seldom given even to blondes. The inside of a sea-shell has the same lustre and delicacy, but it does not pale and flush as did May's cheeks in quick response to her emotions. Waves of maize-coloured hair with a sheen of its own went with the fairness of the skin, and the pretty features were redeemed from a suspicion of insipidity by violet eyes. She was of good height and lissom, with small feet and hands, but the outlines of her figure were Southern in grace and fulness.

After reading the article, she put down the paper without saying a word.

"Why, May, you seem to take it as seriously as your father does. It's nothing so very terrible, is it?"

"What did father say?"

"That it was inspired by Gulmore, and that he was a dangerous man; but I don't see much in it. If my father owed money in Kentucky it shall be repaid, and there the matter ends."

"'Tisn't that I'm troubling about; it's that lecture of yours. Oh, it was wonderful! but I sat trembling all the time. You don't know the people. If they

had understood it better, they'd have made a big fuss about it. I'm frightened now."

"But what fuss can they make? I've surely a right to my own opinions, and I didn't criticise any creed offensively."

"That's it—that's what saved you. Oh, I wish you'd see it as I do! You spoke so enthusiastically about Jesus, that you confused them. A lot of them thought, and think still, that you're a Christian. But if it's brought up again and made clear to them—Won't you understand? If it's made quite clear that Jesus to you was only a man, and not superior even to all other men, and that you believe Christianity has served its purpose, and is now doing harm rather than good in the world, why, they'd not want to have you in the University. Don't you know that?"

"Perhaps you're right," returned the Professor thoughtfully. "You see I wasn't brought up in any creed, and I've lived in so completely different an atmosphere for years past, that it's hard to understand such intolerant bigotry. I remember enough, though, to see that you are right. But, after all, what does it matter? I can't play hypocrite because they're blind fanatics."

"No, but you needn't have gone *quite* so far—been *quite* so frank; and even now you might easily——" She stopped, catching a look of surprise in her lover's face, and sought confusedly to blot out the effect of her last words. "I mean—but of course you know best. I want you to keep your place; you love the work, and no one could do it so well as you. No one, and——"

"It doesn't matter, May. I'm sure you were

thinking of what would be best for both of us, but I've nothing to alter or extenuate. They must do as they think fit, these Christians, if they have the power. After all, it can make no difference to us; I can always get work enough to keep us, even if it isn't such congenial work. But do you think Gulmore's at the bottom of it? Has he so much influence?"

"Yes, I think so," and the girl nodded her head, but she did not give the reasons for her opinion. She knew that Ida Gulmore had been in love with him, so she shrank instinctively from mentioning her name, partly because it might make him pity her, and partly because the love of another woman for him seemed to diminish her pride of exclusive possession. She therefore kept silence while seeking for a way to warn her lover without revealing the truth, which might set him thinking of Ida Gulmore and her fascinating because unrequited passion. At length she said:

"Mr. Gulmore has injured father. He knows him: you'd better take his opinion."

"Your father advises me to have nothing more to do with the election." He didn't say it to try her; he trusted her completely. The girl's answer was emphatic:

"Oh, that's what you should do; I'm frightened for you. Why need you make enemies? The election isn't worth that, indeed it isn't. If father wants to run for Mayor, let him; he knows what he's about. But you, you should do great things, write a great book; and make everyone as proud of you as I am." Her face flushed with enthusiasm. She

felt relieved, too; somehow she had got into the spirit of her part once more. But her lover took the hot face and eager speech as signs of affection, and he drew her to him while his face lit up with joy.

"You darling, darling! You overrate me, dear, but that does me good: makes me work harder. What a pity it is, May, that one can't add a cubit to his stature. I'd be a giant then. . . . . But never fear; it'll be all right. You wouldn't wish me, I'm sure, to run away from a conflict I have provoked; but now I must see my father about those debts, and then we'll have a drive, or perhaps you'd go with me to him. You could wait in the buggy for me. You know I have to speak again this evening."

The girl consented at once, but she was not satisfied with the decision her lover had come to. "It's too plain," she thought in her clear, common-sense way, "that he's getting into a 'fuss' when he might just as well, or better, keep out of it."

May was eminently practical, and not at all as emotional as one might have inferred from the sensitive, quick-changing colour that at one moment flushed her cheeks and at another ebbed, leaving her pallid, as with passion. Not that she was hard-hearted or selfish. Far from it. But her surroundings had moulded her as they do women. Her mother had been one of the belles of Baltimore, a Southern, too, by temperament. May had a brother and a sister older than herself (both were now married), and a younger brother who had taken care that she should not be spoiled for want of direct personal criticism. It was this younger brother, Joe, who first called her "Towhead," and

even now he often made disparaging remarks about "girls who didn't weigh 130"—in Joe's eyes, a Venus of Rubens would have seemed perfect. May was not vain of her looks; indeed, she had only come to take pleasure in them of recent years. As a young girl, comparing herself with her mother, she feared that she would always be "quite homely." Her glass and the attentions of men had gradually shown her the pleasant truth. She did not, however, even now, overrate her beauty greatly. But her character had been modified to advantage in those schoolgirl days, when, with bitter tears, she admitted to herself that she was not pretty. Her teachers' praise of her quickness and memory had taught her to set her pride on learning. And indeed she had been an intelligent child, gifted with a sponge-like faculty of assimilating all kinds of knowledge—the result, perhaps, of generations of educated forbears. The admiration paid to her looks did not cause her to relax her intellectual efforts. But when at the University she found herself outgrowing the ordinary standards of opinion, conceit at first took possession of her. It seemed to her manifest that she had always underrated herself. She was astonished by her own excessive modesty, and keenly interested in it. She had thought herself ugly and she was beautiful, and now it was evident that she was a genius as well. With soul mightily uplifted by dreams of all she would do and the high part she would play in life, always nobly serious, yet with condescension of exquisite charming kindliness, taking herself gravely for a perfect product of the race and time, she proceeded

to write the book which should discover to mankind all her qualities—the delicacy, nobility, and sweetness of an ideal nature.

During this period she even tried to treat Joe with sweet courtesy, but Joe told her not to make herself "more of a doggoned fool" than she was. And soon the dream began to lose its brightness. The book would not advance, and what she wrote did not seem to her wonderful—not inspired and fascinating as it ought to have been. Her reading had given her some slight critical insight. She then showed parts of it to her admirers, hoping thus to justify vanity, but they used the occasion to pay irrelevant compliments, and so disappointed her —all, save Will Thornton, who admitted critically that "it was poetic" and guessed "she ought to write poetry." Accordingly she wrote some lyrics, and one on "Vanished Hopes" really pleased her. Forthwith she read it to Will, who decided "'twas fine, mighty fine. Tennyson had written more, of course, but nothing better—nothing easier to understand." That last phrase killed her trust in him. She sank into despondence. Even when Ida Gulmore, whom she had learned to dislike, began to outshine her in the class, she made no effort. To graduate first of her year appeared a contemptible ambition in comparison with the dreams she had foregone. About this period she took a new interest in her dress; she grew coquettish even, and became a greater favourite than ever. Then Professor Roberts came to the University, and with his coming life opened itself to her anew, vitalized with hopes and fears. She was drawn to him from the first, as

spirit is sometimes drawn to spirit, by an attraction so imperious that it frightened her, and she tried to hold herself away from him. But in her heart she knew that she studied and read only to win his praise. His talents revealed to her the futility of her ambition. Here was one who stood upon the heights beyond her power of climbing, and yet, to her astonishment, he was very doubtful of his ability to gain enduring reputation. Not only was there a plane of knowledge and feeling above the conventional—that she had found out by herself—but there were also table-lands where teachers of repute in the valley were held to be blind guides. Her quick receptivity absorbed the new ideas with eagerness; but she no longer deluded herself. Her practical good sense came to her aid. What seemed difficult or doubtful to the Professor must, she knew, be for ever impossible to her. And already love was upon her, making her humility as sweet as was her admiration. At last he spoke, and life became altogether beautiful to her. As she learned to know him intimately she began to understand his unworldliness, his scholar-like idealism, and ignorance of men and motives, and thus she came to self-possession again, and found her true mission. She realized with joy, and a delightful sense of an assured purpose in life, that her faculty of observation and practical insight, though insufficient as "bases for Eternity," would be of value to her lover. And if she now and then fell back into the part of a nineteenth-century Antigone, it was but a momentary relapse into what had been for a year or so a dear familiar habit. The heart of the girl grew and expanded in the belief

that her new *rôle* of counsellor and worldly guide to her husband was the highest to which any woman could attain.

A few days later Mr. Hutchings had another confidential talk with Professor Roberts, and, as before, the subject was suggested by an article in "The Republican Herald." This paper, indeed, devoted a column or so every day to personal criticism of the Professor, and each attack surpassed its forerunner in virulence of invective. The lover of the ideal played the new part thrust upon him, with excellent sense. He read everything that his opponents put forth, replied to nothing, in spite of the continual solicitation of the editor of "The Democrat," and seemed very soon to regard "The Herald's" calumnies with contemptuous indifference. Meanwhile his own speeches grew in knowledge and vigour. With a scholar's precision he put before his hearers the inner history and significance of job after job. His habits of study helped him to "get up his cases" with crushing completeness. He quickly realized the value of catch-words, but his epigrams not being hardened in the fire of life refused to stick. He did better when he published the balance-sheet of the "ring" in pamphlet form, and showed that each householder paid about one hundred and fifty dollars a year, or twice as much as all his legal taxes, in order to support a party organization the sole object of which was to enrich a few at the expense of the many. One job, in especial, the contract for paving the streets, he stigmatized as a swindle, and asserted that the District Attorney, had he done his duty, would long ago have brought the Mayor and

Town Council before a criminal court as parties to a notorious fraud. His ability, thoroughness, and powers of speech had had a very real effect; his meetings were always crowded, and his hearers were not all Democrats. His youth and transparent honesty gradually won for him a certain reluctant admiration. The public took a lively though impartial interest in the contest. To critical outsiders it seemed not unlikely that the Professor (a word of good-humoured contempt) might "whip" even "old man Gulmore." Bets were made on the result and short odds accepted. Even Mr. Hutchings allowed himself to hope for a favourable issue.

"You've done wonderfully well," was the burden of his conversations with Roberts; "I should feel certain of success against anyone but Gulmore. And he seems to be losing his head—his perpetual abuse excites sympathy with you. If we win I shall owe it mainly to you."

But on this particular morning Lawyer Hutchings had something to say to his friend and helper which he did not like to put into plain words. He began abruptly:

"You've seen the 'Herald?'"

"Yes; there's nothing in it of interest, is there?"

"No; but 'twas foolish of your father to write that letter saying you had paid his Kentucky debts."

"I was sorry when I saw it. I know they'll say I got him to write the letter. But it's only another incident."

"It's true, then? You did pay the money?"

"Yes; I was glad to."

"But it was folly. What had you to do with your

father's debts? Every house to-day should stand on its own foundation."

"I don't agree with you; but in this case there was no question of that sort. My father very generously impoverished himself to send me to Europe and keep me there for six years. I owed him the five thousand dollars, and was only too glad to be able to repay him. You'd have done the same."

"Would I, indeed! Five thousand dollars! I'm not so sure of that." The father's irritation conquered certain grateful memories of his younger days, and the admiration which, in his heart, he felt for the Professor's action, only increased his annoyance. "It must have nearly cleaned you out?"

"Very nearly."

"Well, of course it's your affair, not mine; but I think you foolish. You paid them in full, I suppose? Whew!

"Do you see that the 'Herald' calls upon the University authorities to take action upon your lecture? 'The teaching of Christian youth by an Atheist must be stopped,' and so forth."

"Yes; but they can do nothing. I'm not responsible to them for my religious opinions."

"You're mistaken. A vote of the Faculty can discharge you."

"Impossible! On what grounds?"

"On the ground of immorality. They've got the power in that case. It's a loose word, but effective."

"I'd have a cause of action against them."

"Which you'd be sure to lose. Eleven out of every twelve jurymen in this state would mulct an Agnostic rather than give him damages."

"Ah! that's the meaning, then, I suppose, of this notice I've just got from the secretary to attend a special Faculty meeting on Monday fortnight."

"Let me see it. Why, here it is! The object of the meeting is 'To consider the anti-Christian utterances of Professor Roberts, and to take action thereon.' That's the challenge. Didn't you read it?"

"No; as soon as I opened it and saw the printed form, I took it for the usual notification, and put it aside to think of this election work. But it would seem as if the Faculty intended to out-herald the 'Herald.'"

"They are simply allowed to act first in order that the 'Herald,' a day later, may applaud them. It's all worked by Gulmore, and I tell you again, he's dangerous."

"He may be; but I won't change for abuse, nor yet to keep my post. Let him do his worst. I've not attacked him hitherto for certain reasons of my own, nor do I mean to now. But he can't frighten me; he'll find that out."

"Well, we'll see. But, at any rate, it was my duty to warn you. It would be different if I were rich, but, as it is, I can only give May a little, and——"

"My dear Hutchings, don't let us talk of that. In giving me May, you give me all I want." The young man's tone was so conclusive that it closed the conversation.

MR. GULMORE had not been trained for a political career. He had begun life as a clerk

in a hardware store in his native town. But in his early manhood the Abolition agitation had moved him deeply—the colour of his skin, he felt, would never have made him accept slavery—and he became known as a man of extreme views. Before he was thirty he had managed to save some thousands of dollars. He married and emigrated to Columbus, Ohio, where he set up a business. It was there, in the stirring years before the war, that he first threw himself into politics; he laboured indefatigably as an Abolitionist without hope or desire of personal gain. But the work came to have a fascination for him, and he saw possibilities in it of pecuniary emolument such as the hardware business did not afford. When the war was over, and he found himself scarcely richer than he had been before it began, he sold his store and emigrated again—this time to Tecumseh, Nebraska, intending to make political organization the business of his life. He wanted "to grow up" with a town and become its master from the beginning. As the negroes constituted the most ignorant and most despised class, a little solicitation made him their leader. In the first election it was found that "Gulmore's negroes" voted to a man, and that he thereby controlled the Republican party. In the second year of his residence in Tecumseh he got the contract for lighting the town with gas. The contract was to run for twenty years, and was excessively liberal, for Mr. Gulmore had practically no competitor, no one who understood gas manufacture, and who had the money and pluck to embark in the enterprise. He quickly formed a syndicate, and fulfilled the conditions of

the contract. The capital was fixed at two hundred thousand dollars, and the syndicate earned a profit of nearly forty per cent. in the first year. Ten years later a one hundred dollar share was worth a thousand. This first success was the foundation of Mr. Gulmore's fortune. The income derived from the gas-works enabled him to spend money on the organization of his party. The first manager of the works was rewarded with the position of Town Clerk—an appointment which ran for five years, but which under Mr. Gulmore's rule was practically permanent. His foremen became the most energetic of ward-chairmen. He was known to pay well, and to be a kind if strenuous master. What he had gained in ten years by the various contracts allotted to him or his nominees no one could guess; he was certainly very rich. From year to year, too, his control of the city government had grown more complete. There was now no place in the civil or judicial establishment of the city or county which did not depend on his will, and his influence throughout the State was enormous.

A municipal election, or, indeed, any election, afforded Mr. Gulmore many opportunities of quiet but intense self-satisfaction. He loved the struggle and the consciousness that from his office-chair he had so directed his forces that victory was assured. He always allowed a broad margin in order to cover the unforeseen. Chance, and even ill-luck, formed a part of his strategy; the sore throat of an eloquent speaker; the illness of a popular candidate; a storm on polling-day—all were to him factors in the problem. He reckoned as if his opponents

might have all the luck upon their side; but, while considering the utmost malice of fortune, it was his delight to base his calculations upon the probable, and to find them year by year approaching more nearly to absolute exactitude. As soon as his ward-organization had been completed, he could estimate the votes of his party within a dozen or so. His plan was to treat every contest seriously, to bring all his forces to the poll on every occasion—nothing kept men together, he used to say, like victory. It was the number of his opponent's minority which chiefly interested him; but by studying the various elections carefully, he came to know better than anyone the value as a popular candidate of every politician in the capital, or, indeed, in the State. The talent of the man for organization lay in his knowledge of men, his fairness and liberality, and, perhaps, to a certain extent, in the power he possessed of inspiring others with confidence in himself and his measures. He was never satisfied till the fittest man in each ward was the Chairman of the ward; and if money would not buy that particular man's services, as sometimes though rarely happened, he never rested until he found the gratification which bound his energy to the cause. Besides—and this was no small element in his successes—his temper disdained the applause of the crowd. He had never "run" for any office himself, and was not nearly so well known to the mass of the electorate as many of his creatures. The senator, like the mayor or office-messenger of his choice, got all the glory: Mr. Gulmore was satisfied with winning the victory, and reaping the fruits of it.

He therefore excited, comparatively speaking, no jealousy; and this, together with the strength of his position, accounts for the fact that he had never been seriously opposed before Professor Roberts came upon the scene.

Better far than Lawyer Hutchings, or anyone else, Mr. Gulmore knew that the relative strength of the two parties had altered vastly within the year. Reckoning up his forces at the beginning of the campaign, he felt certain that he could win—could carry his whole ticket, including a rather unpopular Mayor; but the majority in his favour would be small, and the prospect did not please him, for the Professor's speeches had aroused envy. He understood that if his majority were not overwhelming he would be assailed again next year more violently, and must in the long run inevitably lose his power. Besides, "fat" contracts required unquestionable supremacy. He began, therefore, by instituting such a newspaper-attack upon the Professor as he hoped would force him to abandon the struggle. When this failed, and Mr. Gulmore saw that it had done worse than fail, that it had increased his opponent's energy and added to his popularity, he went to work again to consider the whole situation. He must win and win "big," that was clear; win too, if possible, in a way that would show his "smartness" and demonstrate his adversary's ignorance of the world. His anger had at length been aroused; personal rivalry was a thing he could not tolerate at any time, and Roberts had injured his position in the town. He was resolved to give the young man such a lesson that others would be slow to follow his example.

The difficulty of the problem was one of its attractions. Again and again he turned the question over in his mind—How was he to make his triumph and the Professor's defeat sensational? All the factors were present to him and he dwelt upon them with intentness. He was a man of strong intellect; his mind was both large and quick, but its activity, owing to want of education and to greedy physical desires, had been limited to the ordinary facts and forces of life. What books are to most persons gifted with an extraordinary intelligence, his fellow-men were to Mr. Gulmore—a study at once stimulating and difficult, of an incomparable variety and complexity. His lack of learning was of advantage to him in judging most men. Their stock of ideas, sentiments and desires had been his for years, and if he now viewed the patchwork quilt of their morality with indulgent contempt, at least he was familiar with all the constituent shades of it. But he could not make the Professor out—and this added to his dislike of him; he recognized that Roberts was not, as he had at first believed, a mere mouthpiece of Hutchings, but he could not fathom his motives; besides, as he said to himself, he had no need to; Roberts was plainly a "crank," book-mad, and the species did not interest him. But Hutchings he knew well; knew that like himself Hutchings, while despising ordinary prejudices, was ruled by ordinary greeds and ambitions. In intellect they were both above the average, but not in morals. So, by putting himself in the lawyer's place, a possible solution of the problem occurred to him.

A couple of days before the election, Mr. Hutch-

ings, who had been hard at work till the evening among his chief subordinates, was making his way homeward when Mr. Prentiss accosted him, with the request that he would accompany him to his rooms for a few minutes on a matter of the utmost importance. Having no good reason for refusing, Mr. Hutchings followed the editor of the "Herald" up a flight of stairs into a large and comfortable room. As he entered and looked about him Mr. Gulmore came forward:

"I wanted a talk with you, Lawyer, where we wouldn't be disturbed, and Prentiss thought it would be best to have it here, and I guess he was about right. It's quiet and comfortable. Won't you be seated?"

"Mr. Gulmore!" exclaimed the surprised lawyer stopping short. "I don't think there's anything to be discussed between us, and as I'm in a hurry to get home to dinner, I think I'll——"

"Don't you make any mistake," interrupted Mr. Gulmore, "I mean business—business that'll pay both you and me, and I guess 'twon't do you any damage to take a seat and listen to me for a few minutes."

As Lawyer Hutchings, overborne by the authority of the voice and manner, sat down, he noticed that Mr. Prentiss had disappeared. Interpreting rightly the other's glance, Mr. Gulmore began:

"We're alone, Hutchin's. This matter shall be played fair and square. I guess you know that my word can be taken at its face-value." Then, settling himself in his chair, he went on:

"You and I hev been runnin' on opposite tickets for a good many years, and I've won right along. It has paid me to win and it has not paid you to lose. Now, it's like this. You reckon that those Irishmen on the line give you a better show. They do; but not enough to whip me. You appear to think that that'll have to be tried the day after tomorrow, but you ought to know by now that when I say a thing is so, it's so—every time. If you had a chance, I'd tell you: I'm playin' square. I ken carry my ticket from one end to the other; I ken carry Robinson as Mayor against you by at least two hundred and fifty of a majority, and the rest of your ticket has just no show at all—you know that. But, even if you could get in this year or next what good would it do you to be Mayor? You're not runnin' for the five thousand dollars a year salary, I reckon, and that's about all you'd get—unless you worked with me. I want a good Mayor, a man like you, of position and education, a fine speaker that knows everybody and is well thought of—popular. Robinson's not good enough for me; he hain't got the manners nor the knowledge, nor the popularity. I'd have liked to have had you on my side right along. It would have been better for both of us, but you were a Democrat, an' there wasn't any necessity. Now there is. I want to win this election by a large majority, an' you ken make that sartin. You see I speak square. Will you join me?"

The question was thrown out abruptly. Mr. Gulmore had caught a gleam in the other's eye as he spoke of a good Mayor and his qualifications.

"He bites, I guess," was his inference, and accordingly he put the question at once.

Mr. Hutchings, brought to himself by the sudden interrogation, hesitated, and decided to temporize. He could always refuse to join forces, and Gulmore might "give himself away." He answered:

"I don't quite see what you mean. How are we to join?"

"By both of us givin' somethin'."

"What am I to give?"

"Withdraw your candidature for Mayor as a Democrat."

"I can't do that."

"Jest hear me out. The city has advertised for tenders for a new Court House and a new Town Hall. The one building should cover both, and be near the middle of the business part. That's so—ain't it? Well, land's hard to get anywhere there, and I've the best lots in the town. I guess" (carelessly) "the contract will run to a million dollars; that should mean two hundred thousand dollars to some one. It's like this, Hutchin's: Would you rather come in with me and make a joint tender, or run for Mayor and be beaten?"

Mr. Hutchings started. Ten years before the proposal would have won him. But now his children were provided for—all except Joe, and his position as Counsel to the Union Pacific Railroad lifted him above pecuniary anxieties. Then the thought of the Professor and May came to him—No! he wouldn't sell himself. But in some strange way the proposition excited him; he felt elated. His quickened pulse-beats prevented him from

realizing the enormity of the proposed transaction, but he knew that he ought to be indignant. What a pity it was that Gulmore had made no proposal which he might have accepted—and then disclosed!

"If I understand you, you propose that I should take up this contract, and make money out of it. If that was your business with me, you've made a mistake, and Professor Roberts is right."

"Hev I?" asked Mr. Gulmore slowly, coldly, in sharp contrast to the lawyer's apparent excitement and quick speech. Contemptuously he thought that Hutchings was "foolisher" than he had imagined—or was he sincere? He would have weighed this last possibility before speaking, if the mention of Roberts had not angered him. His combativeness made him persist:

"If you don't want to come in with me, all you've got to do is to say so. You've no call to get up on your hind legs about it; it's easy to do settin'. But don't talk poppycock like that Professor; he's silly. He talks about the contract for street pavin', and it ken be proved—'twas proved in the 'Herald'—that our streets cost less per foot than the streets of any town in this State. He knows nothin'. He don't even know that an able man can make half a million out of a big contract, an' do the work better than an ordinary man could do it who'd lose money by it. At a million our Court House'll be cheap; and if the Professor had the contract with the plans accordin' to requirement to-morrow, he'd make nothin' out of it—not a red cent. No, sir. If I ken, that's my business—and yours, ain't it? Or, are we to work for nothin' because he's a fool?"

While Mr. Gulmore was speaking, Mr. Hutchings gave himself to thought. After all, why was he running for Mayor? The place, as Gulmore said, would be of no use to him. He was weary of fighting which only ended in defeat, and could only end in a victory that would be worthless. Mayor, indeed! If he had a chance of becoming a Member of Congress, that would be different. And across his brain flitted the picture so often evoked by imagination in earlier years. Why not? Gulmore could make it certain. Would he?

"What you say seems plausible enough, but I don't see my way. I don't feel inclined to go into business at my time of life."

"You don't need to go into the business. I'll see to that."

"No. I don't need money now particularly."

"Next year, Hutchin's, I'll have a better man than Robinson against you. Lawyer Nevilson's as good as ken be found, I reckon, and he wouldn't refuse to join me if I gave him the chance." But while he was speaking, Mr. Gulmore kept his opponent's answer in view. He considered it thoughtfully; 'I don't need money now particularly.' What did the man need? Congress? As a Republican? That would do as well. When Mr. Hutchings shook his head, careless of the menace, Mr. Gulmore made up his mind. His obstinacy came out; he would win at any price. He began:

"It's what I said at first, Hutchin's; we've each got to give what the other wants. I've told you what I want; tell me squarely what you want, an' p'r'aps the thing ken be settled."

As Mr. Hutchings did not answer at once, the Boss went on:

"You're in politics for somethin'. What is it? If you're goin' to buck agen me, you might as well draw out; you'll do no good. You know that. See here! Is it the State Legislature you're after, or—Congress?"

The mere words excited Mr. Hutchings; he wanted to be back again in the East as a victor; he longed for the cultivated amenities and the social life of Washington. He could not help exclaiming:

"Ah! if it hadn't been for you I'd have been in Congress long ago."

"As a Democrat? Not from this State, I guess."

"What does it matter? Democrat or Republican, the difference now is only in the name."

"The price is high, Hutchin's. I ask you to give up runnin' for Mayor, and you ask me for a seat in Congress instead. But—I'll pay it, if you do as I say. You've no chance in this State as a Democrat; you know that yourself. To run for Mayor as a Democrat hurts you; that must stop right now—in your own interest. But what I want from you is that you don't announce your withdrawal till the day after to-morrow, an' meantime you say nothin' to the Professor or anyone else. Are you agreed?"

Mr. Hutchings paused. The path of his desire lay open before him; the opportunity was not to be missed; he grew eager. But still there was something disagreeable in an action which demanded secrecy. He must think coolly. What was the proposal? What was he giving? Nothing. He didn't wish to be Mayor with Gulmore and all the City

Council against him. Nothing—except the withdrawal on the very morning of the election. That would look bad, but he could pretend illness, and he had told the Professor he didn't care to be Mayor; he had advised him not to mix in the struggle; besides, Roberts would not suspect anything, and if he did there'd be no shadow of proof for a long time to come. In the other scale of the balance he had Gulmore's promise: it was trustworthy, he knew, but——:

"Do you mean that you'll run me for the next term and get me elected?"

"I'll do all I know, and I guess you'll succeed."

"I have nothing but your word."

"Nothin'."

Again Mr. Hutchings paused. To accept definitively would be dangerous if the conversation had had listeners. It was characteristic of the place and time that he could suspect a man of laying such a trap, upon whose word he was prepared to rely. Mr. Gulmore saw and understood his hesitation:

"I said we were alone, Hutchin's, and I meant it. Jest as I say now, if you withdraw and tell no one and be guided by me in becoming a Republican, I'll do what I ken to get you into Congress," and as he spoke he stood up.

Mr. Hutchings rose, too, and said, as if in excuse: "I wanted to think it over, but I'm agreed. I'll do as you say," and with a hurried "Good night!" he left the room.

Mr. Gulmore returned to his chair and lit a cigar. He was fairly satisfied with the result of his efforts.

His triumph over the Professor would not be as flagrant, perhaps, as if Hutchin's' name had been linked with his in a city contract; but, he thought with amusement, everyone would suspect that he had bought the lawyer for cash. What a fool the man was! What did he want to get into Congress for? Weak vanity! He'd have no weight there. To prefer a seat in Congress to wealth—silly. Besides, Hutchin's would be a bad candidate. Of course the party name would cover anythin'. But what a mean skunk! Here Mr. Gulmore's thoughts reverted to himself. Ought he to keep his word and put such a man into Congress? He hated to break a promise. But why should he help the Professor's father-in-law to power? Wall, there was no hurry. He'd make up his mind later. Anyway, the Professor'd have a nice row to hoe on the mornin' of the election, and Boss Gulmore'd win and win big, an' that was the point. The laugh would be on the Professor——

ON the morning of the election Professor Roberts was early afoot. He felt hopeful, light-hearted, and would not confess even to himself that his good spirits were due chiefly to the certainty that in another twelve hours his electioneering would be at an end. The work of canvassing and public speaking had become very disagreeable to him. The mere memory of the speeches he had listened to, had left, as it were, an unpleasant aftertaste. How the crowds had cheered the hackneyed platitudes, the blatant patriotic appeals, the malevolent caricature of oppo-

nents! Something unspeakably trivial, vulgar, and evil in it all reminded him of tired children when the romping begins to grow ill-natured.

And if the intellectual side of the struggle had been offensive, the moral atmosphere of the Committee Rooms, infected as it was by the candidates, had seemed to him to be even worse—mephitic, poisonous. He had shrunk from realizing the sensations which had been forced upon him there—a recoil of his nature as from unappeasable wild-beast greeds, with their attendant envy, suspicion, and hatred seething like lava under the thin crust of a forced affability, of a good-humour assumed to make deception easy. He did not want to think of it; it was horrible. And perhaps, after all, he was mistaken; perhaps his dislike of the work had got upon his nerves, and showed him everything in the darkest colours. It could scarcely be as bad as he thought, or human society would be impossible. But argument could not blunt the poignancy of his feelings; he preferred, therefore, to leave them inarticulate, striving to forget. In any case, the ordeal would soon be over; it had to be endured for a few hours more, and then he would plunge into his books, and enjoy good company, he and May together.

He was still lingering over this prospect when the servant came to tell him that some gentlemen were waiting for him, and he found in the sitting-room half-a-dozen of his favourite students. One of the Seniors, named Cartrell, a young man of strong figure, and keen, bold face, remarked, as he shook hands, that they had come to accompany him—"Elections are sometimes rough, and we know

the ropes." Roberts thanked them warmly, and they set off.

The Committee Rooms of the Democratic party were situated near the Court-house, in what had been once the centre, but was now the edge of the town. The little troop had to pass through the negro quarter—small frame-houses, peppered over grassless, bare lots, the broken-down fences protesting against unsociable isolation. The Rooms, from the outside, reminded one of a hive of angry bees. In and out of the door men were hurrying, and a crowd swarmed on the side-walk talking in a loud, excited hum. As soon as the Professor was recognized, a silence of astonishment fell upon the throng. With stares of curiosity they drew aside to let him enter. Slightly surprised by the reception, the Professor passed into the chief room. At a table in the middle a man was speaking in a harsh, loud voice—one Simpson, a popular orator, who had held aloof from the meetings of the party. He was saying:

"It's a put-up game between them, but the question is who's to go on the ticket in——"

As Simpson's eyes met those of Roberts he stopped speaking.

"Good morning, gentlemen. Please continue, Mr. Simpson; I hope I'm not interrupting you."

The Professor did not like Mr. Simpson. The atrabilious face, the bitter, thin lips, and grey eyes veined with yellow, reminded him indefinably of a wild beast. Mr. Simpson seemed to take the courteous words as a challenge. Drawing his wiry figure up he said, with insult in voice and manner:

"Perhaps you've come to nominate a Mayor; we'd all like to know your choice."

"I don't understand you."

The Professor's tone was frank, his sincerity evident, but Simpson went on:

"Don't ye? Perhaps Hutchin's has sent you to say, as he's sick it'd be well to run Robinson on both tickets—eh?"

"I don't know what you mean. I expected to meet Mr. Hutchings here. Is he ill?"

"He'll get well soon, I reckon; but after taking a perscription from Gulmore, he's mighty bad and can't leave the house."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that Hutchin's has withdrawn his candidature as Mayor. I mean that the 'Herald' has the announcin' of it. I mean it's a put-up job between him and Gulmore to ruin the Democratic party in this town. I mean——"

As the Professor drew back in amazement, young Cartrell stepped in front of him and addressed Simpson:

"What proof have you of what you say?"

"Proof! Proof enough. Does an honest man resign a candidature on the morning of an election, and give the other side the news before his own party?"

The interruption had given Roberts time for reflection. He felt that Simpson's facts must be right. It was characteristic of him that his first thought was, Had Hutchings withdrawn in order to save him from further attacks? No. If he had he'd have told him before the event. A sort of nausea over-

powered him as he remembered that Hutchings had related how Gulmore had bought Patrick Byrne—and now he, too, had sold himself. As in a flash Hutchings' weakness of fibre was laid bare to him. "That's the reason I couldn't find him yesterday." His heart sank within him. "How could Hutchings have been so—?" With the belief in the lawyer's guilt came the understanding that he too was concerned, suspected even. Disgust of traitorism, conscious innocence impelled him to clear himself—but how? To his surprise he found that companionship with these men had given him some insight into their character. He put the question to Simpson:

"Can anything be done now?"

The steadiness of the tone, the resolve in his face, excited a certain curiosity. Shrugging his shoulders, Simpson replied:

"We've not got a candidate. It's too late to get the party together. New tickets 'd have to be printed. I——"

"Will you accept the candidature?" Reading the man at once, Roberts turned to the others: "Gentlemen, I hope someone will second me; I nominate Mr. Simpson as Mayor, and propose that his name should be substituted for that of Mr. Hutchings. To show that I'm in earnest I'll contribute five hundred dollars towards the expense of printing the tickets."

The Professor's offer of money seemed to exercise a magical influence upon the crowd; the loud tones, the provocative rudeness of speech and bearing, disappeared at once; the men began to show him the respect of attention, and Mr. Simpson was even

quicker than the rest in changing his attitude—perhaps because he hoped to gain more than they did.

"I had no idee," he began, "but if the Committee thinks I oughter run I've no objection. I hain't ever cared for office, but I'm a party-man, an' what the party wants me to do I'll do every time. I'm a Democrat right through. I guess Lawyer Hutchin's has gone back on us, but that's not your fault, Professor, and five hundred dollars—an' your work will do a pile. The folk all like you an'—respect you an'——"

Roberts looked at the man; his offer had been a movement of indignant contempt, and yet it had succeeded. He could have laughed; the key to the enigma was in his hands; these men answered to the motive of self-interest as a ship answers to the helm, and yet—how revolting it all was! The next moment he again banished reflection.

"I'll go and get the money, and return as soon as possible. In the meantime, perhaps you, Mr. Simpson, will see that the printing is begun without delay. Then if you'll tell us what polling-stations need superintendence, my friends and I will do our best."

The appeal found an immediate response—in a few minutes order and energetic work had taken the place of the former angry excitement and recrimination.

To Professor Roberts the remainder of the day was one whirl of restless labour; he hastened from one polling-station to another, and when the round was completed drove to the Central Rooms, where

questions had to be answered, and new arrangements made without time for thought. Then he was off again on his hurried round as canvasser. One incident, however, made a definite impression upon him. Returning for the second or third time to the Central Rooms he found himself in a crowd of Irish labourers who had come in deference to priestly bidding to record their votes. Mr. Hutchings' retirement had excited their native suspiciousness; they felt that they had been betrayed, and yet the peremptory orders they had received must be followed. The satisfaction of revolt being denied to them, their anger became dangerous. Professor Roberts faced them quietly; he soon saw that they were sincere, or were playing the part of sincerity; he therefore spoke for the cause, for the party to which they belonged; surely they wouldn't abandon the struggle because a leader had deserted them! His words and manner; his appeal to their combativeness; his earnestness and good temper were successful. The storm of invective gradually subsided, and although one or two, for the sake of a row, sought to insult him, they did not go to extremes in face of the resolute disapprobation of the American party-leaders. Loyalty to their shibboleth was beginning to draw them, still grumbling and making use of expressive imprecations, on the way to the nearest polling-station, when one of their leaders drew Professor Roberts aside, and asked him:

"Are the bhoys to have nuthin' for their throuble? Half a day they'll lose, so they will—a dollar each now would be no more than fair——"

The Professor shook his head; he was not rich, he said, and had already spent more money in the contest than he could afford.

"Be gob, it's poor worruk this talkin' an' votin' for us that gets nothin' by it"—the phrase stuck in his memory as illustrating the paltry baseness of the whole affair. It was with a sense of relief that he threw himself again into the turmoil that served to deaden thought. As the day wore towards evening he became conscious of fatigue, a weariness that was not of the body alone, but of the head and heart. After the closing of the polls he returned to the Central Rooms. They were filled with an enthusiastic crowd, most of whom professed to believe that the Democratic party had won all along the line. Roberts found it hard to bear their self-gratulation and the exuberance of their triumph, but when Simpson began to take the liberties of comradeship with him, the cup ran over. He cut the man short with a formally polite phrase, and betook himself to his house. He would not think even of May; her image brought him face to face with her father; and he wanted rest.

In the morning the Professor awoke with a feeling of utter depression. Before he opened the paper he was sure that his hopelessness had been justified. He was right—Gulmore had carried his whole ticket, and Simpson had been beaten by a majority of more than a thousand. The Democratic organ did not scruple to ascribe the defeat to the fact that Lawyer Hutchings had sold his party. The simulated indignation of the journalist found expression in

phrases which caricatured the simplicity of sincere condemnation. "Never did shameless corruption . . . ." Roberts could not read the stuff. Yet the feigned passion and tawdry rhetoric in some way stirred up his bile; he would see Hutchings and—but if he unpacked his heart's bitterness upon her father, he would hurt May. He must restrain himself; Hutchings would understand from his manner, and May would be sympathetic—as she always was.

Another thought exasperated him afresh. His idealism had made him ridiculous in the eyes of the townsfolk. He had spent money he could ill spare in a hopeless cause, which was not even a worthy one. And now everybody was laughing at him or sneering—he grew hot with shame. That his motives were honourable only heightened the ludicrousness of his action: it seemed as if he had made a fool of himself. He almost wished that he had left the Democrats to their own devices. But no! he had done the right, and that was the main point. The sense of failure, however, robbed him of confidence in regard to the future. How should he act? Since high motives were ineffectual, Quixotic, ought he to discard them and come down to the ordinary level? 'Twould be better not to live at all. The half-life of a student, a teacher, dwelling apart from the world, would be preferable to such degradation; but ——

The situation appeared to him to be so difficult that as soon as he had taken his breakfast he went out for a walk away from the town in order to avoid importunate visits, and to decide upon a course of conduct. The air and exercise invigorated him; the peace and solitude of the prairie, the

beauty of earth and sky, the unconsciousness of nature consoled him, reduced his troubles to relative unimportance, and allowed him to regain his equanimity.

Even his ideas in regard to Hutchings underwent a change. After all it was not his part to condemn; his indignation owed its heat to baffled egotism and paltry vanity. When the personal element was abstracted from the causes of his vexation, what remained? Were Hutchings a figure in history, would he judge him with the same intolerance? No; weakness, corruptibility even, would then excite no harsher feeling than a sort of amused contempt. The reflection mitigated his anger. He began to take an intellectual pleasure in the good-humoured acceptance of the wrong inflicted upon him. Plato was right, it was well to suffer injustice without desiring to retaliate. He had yet to learn that just as oil only smoothes the surface of waves, so reason has merely a superficial effect upon character.

Early in the afternoon he made his way to May's home. According to his habit he passed by the servant-girl and entered the study—to find himself face to face with the lawyer.

The shock of disappointment and a certain latent antagonism caused him to speak with a directness which was in itself discourteous.

"Is Miss May in? I wished to see her." After a momentary pause he added, with a tinge of sarcasm, "Your illness wasn't serious, I see."

Mr. Hutchings was not taken by surprise; he had prepared for this meeting, and had resolved to defend himself. The task, he believed, would be easy.

He had almost persuaded himself that he had acted in the Professor's interest. Roberts was singularly unworldly; he might accept the explanation, and if he didn't—what did it matter? His own brighter prospects filled him with a sense of triumph; in the last three days his long-repressed vanity had shot up to self-satisfaction, making him callous to what Roberts or anyone else might think. But the sneer in his visitor's words stung him, induced him to throw off the mask of illness which he had intended to assume. He replied with an indifference that was defiant:

"No; I wasn't well yesterday, but I'm better now, though I shall keep indoors for a day or two. A chill, I suppose."

Receiving no answer, he found relief in complete boldness.

"You see my prediction as to the result of the election has been justified?"

"You might even say *pars magna fui*."

The retort slipped out. The impudent challenge had to be met. The Professor did not realize how contemptuously he spoke.

The womanish weakness in Hutchings sprang to hurried attack.

"At any rate you've no cause for reproach. I resigned chiefly to shield you. I told you long ago that I didn't want particularly to be Mayor, and the assault upon your position in the University decided me. There was no way to save your place except by giving Gulmore the victory he wanted. You're engaged to May, and May is fond of you: I'm not rich, and a post of three thousand dollars a

year is not often to be found by a young man. What would you do if you were dismissed? I had to—sacrifice myself. Not that it matters much, but I've got myself into a fuss with the party, injured myself all round on your account, and then you talk as if you had some reason to be offended. That's hardly right, Professor." The lawyer was satisfied with his case; his concluding phrase built a bridge for a magnanimous reconciliation.

"You wish me to believe that you resigned at the last moment without telling me of your intention in order to further my interests?" Mr. Hutchings was disagreeably shocked by the disdainful, incredulous question; Roberts was harder to blind than he had supposed; his indignation became more than half sincere.

"I didn't make up my mind till the last minute—I couldn't. It wasn't easy for me to leave the party I've fought with for ten years. And the consequences don't seem likely to be pleasant to me. But that doesn't signify. This discussion is useless. If you'll take my advice you'll think of answering the charge that will be brought against you in the Faculty meeting, instead of trying to get up a groundless accusation against me." The menace in the words was not due solely to excitement and ill-temper. Mr. Hutchings had been at pains to consider all his relations with the Professor. He had hoped to deceive him, at least for the moment, and gain time—postpone a painful decision. He had begun to wish that the engagement between Roberts and May might be broken off. In six months or a year he would have to declare himself on Gulmore's

side; the fact would establish his complicity, and he had feared what he now knew, that Roberts would be the severest of critics—an impossible son-in-law. Besides, in the East, as the daughter of a Member of Congress, May might command a high position —with her looks she could marry anyone—while Roberts would be dismissed or compelled to resign his post. A young man without a career who would play censor upon him in his own house was not to be thought of. The engagement must be terminated. May could be brought to understand. . . .

The Professor did not at once grasp the situation in so far as he himself was concerned. But he divined the cause of the lawyer's irritability, and refrained from pushing the argument further. The discussion could, indeed, serve no purpose, save to embitter the quarrel. He therefore answered quietly:

"I didn't come here to dispute with you. I came to see May. Is she in?"

"No, I think not. I believe she went out some time ago."

"In that case I'll go home. Perhaps you'll tell her I called. Good day."

"Good day!"

As the Professor left the house his depression of the morning returned upon him. He was dissatisfied with himself. He had intended to show no anger, no resentment, and, nevertheless, his temper had run away with him. He recognized that he had made a grave mistake, for he was beginning to foresee the consequences of it. Trained to severe thinking, but unaccustomed to analyze motives, the full

comprehension of Hutchings' attitude and its probable effects upon his happiness only came to him gradually, but it came at length so completely that he could remember the very words of the foregoing conversation, and recall the tones of the voices. He could rebuild the puzzle; his understanding of it, therefore, must be the true one. The irrationality of the defence was a final proof that the lawyer had played him false. "Hutchings did sell himself—most likely for place. He didn't fear a quarrel with me—that was evident; perhaps he wishes to get rid of me—evident, too. He believes that I shall be dismissed, or else he wouldn't have laid stress upon the importance of my keeping my position. When I spoke of May he was curt. And the explanation? He has wronged me. The old French proverb holds true, 'The offender seldom forgives.' He'll probably go on to harm me further, for I remind him of his vileness. This, then, is life, not as I imagined it, but as it is, and such creatures as Hutchings are human beings. Well, after all, it is better to know the truth than to cheat oneself with a mirage. I shall appreciate large natures with noble and generous impulses better, now that I know how rare they are."

In his room he found May awaiting him. Across his surprise and joy there came an intense admiration of her, a heart-pang of passionate gratitude. As she moved towards him her incommunicable grace of person and manner completed the charm. The radiant gladness of the eyes; the outstretched hands; the graceful form, outlined in silver-grey; the

diadem of honey-coloured hair; something delicate yet courageous, proud yet tender in her womanhood remained with him ever afterwards.

"Ah, May!" The word seemed to bring joy and tingling life to his half-numbed heart. He seized her hands and drew her to him, and kissed her on the hair, and brows, and eyes with an abandonment of his whole nature, such as she had never before known in him. All her shyness, her uneasiness vanished in the happiness of finding that she had so pleased him, and mingled with this joy was a new delightful sense of her own power. When released from his embrace she questioned him by a look. His emotion astonished her.

"My love," he said, kissing her hands, "how good of you to come to me, how sweet and brave you are to wait for me here! I was growing weak with fear lest I should lose you, too, in the general wreck. And you came and sat here for me patiently—Darling!"

There was a mingling of self-surrender and ruffled pride in her smiling reproach:

"Lose me? What do you mean? I waited for you last night, sir, and all this weary morning, till I could wait no longer; I had to find you. I would have stayed at home till you came; I meant to, but father startled me: he said he was afraid you'd lose your place as Professor in spite of all he had done for you. 'Twas good of him, wasn't it, to give up running for Mayor, so as not to embitter Gulmore against you? I was quite proud of him. But you won't lose your post, will you? Has anything serious happened?—Dear!"

He paused to think, but he could not see any way to avoid telling her the truth. Disappointments had so huddled upon him, the insight he had won into human nature was so desolating that his heart ached for sympathy and affection. He loved her; she was to be his wife; how could he help winning her to his side? Besides, her words voiced his own fears—her father had already begun to try to part them. She must know all and judge. But how? Should he give her "The Tribune" to read? No—it was vindictive.

"Come and sit down, May, and I'll tell you what happened yesterday. You shall judge for yourself whether I was right or wrong."

He told her, point by point, what had occurred. May listened in silence till he stopped.

"But why did he resign? What could he gain by that?"

While she was speaking a thought crimsoned her cheeks; she had found the key to the enigma. Three nights before her father had talked of Washington and the East with a sort of exultation. At the time she had not paid much attention to this, though it had struck her as very different from his habit. Now the peculiarity of it confirmed her suspicion. In some way or other his action in resigning was connected with his inexplicable high spirits. A wave of indignation swept over her. Not that she felt the disgust which had sickened the Professor when he first heard of the traitorism. He had condemned Mr. Hutchings on the grounds of public morality; May's anger was aroused because her father had sought to deceive *her;* had tried

by lying suggestion to take credit to himself, whereas—

"I wouldn't have believed it," she murmured, with the passionate revolt of youth against mean deceit. "I can never forgive him or trust him again."

"Don't let us talk of it any more, dear. I wouldn't have told you only I was afraid he would try to separate us. Now I know you are on my side I wouldn't have you judge him harshly."

"On your side," she repeated, with a certain exaltation of manner. "On your side always in spite of everything. I feel for you more intensely than for myself." In a lower voice and with hesitating speech she added: "Did he—did he tell you that he resigned on your account?"

He nodded.

"And you're not angry?"

"No." He smiled slightly. "I understand men better now than I did yesterday. That's all."

"Oh, but you ought to be mad. I am. How can you——"

"Let us talk, dear, of what concerns us more. Have you heard anything? From what your father said I half fear that the meeting to-morrow may go against me. Has no one called?"

"Professor Krazinski. I saw his card on the table when I came in. You think it's a bad sign that he's the only one?"

"I'm afraid so. You see he was brought up in Europe and knows the value of toleration, while the others—It may be merely anxiety, but I'm growing suspicious of everyone now. I catch myself attri-

buting low motives to men, without reason. That electioneering has infected me. I hate myself for it, but I can't help it; I loathe the self-seeking and the vileness. I'd rather not know men at all than see them as they've shown themselves lately. I want to get away and rinse my mouth out and forget all about it—away somewhere with you, my sweet love."

"But you mustn't let them condemn you without an effort." While speaking she put her hand on his shoulder and moved close to him. "It might injure us later. And you know you can persuade them if you like. No one can listen to you without being won over. And I want you to keep your post; you love teaching and you're the best teacher in the world, ah——"

He put his arms round her, and she bowed her head on his neck, that he might not see the gathering tears.

"You're right, dear. I spoke hastily. I'll do my best. It won't be as bad as we think. My colleagues are men of some education and position. They're not like the crowd of ignorant voters and greedy place-hunters; they'll listen to reason, and" —half bitterly—"they've no motive to do me wrong. Besides, Krazinski has called, and I scarcely know him; perhaps the others didn't think of coming. It was kind of him, wasn't it? I'm very grateful to him. He must be a good fellow."

"What has he done so wonderful? Oh, my!"—and she turned her face up to his with half-laughing deprecation—"I'm afraid I'm deteriorating too. I can't hear you praise anyone now without feeling

horribly jealous. Yes, he must be good. But don't be *too* grateful to him, or—I must be going now, and, oh! what a long time it'll be until to-morrow! I shall have grown old before—to-morrow."

"Sweetheart! You'll come here and wait for me in the afternoon, won't you? I shall want to see you so much."

"Yes, if you like; but I intended to go up to the University—mayn't I? It'll seem ages—æons—waiting here by myself."

"The meeting will not last long, and I'll come to you as soon as it's over. Darling, you don't know how much you have helped me. You have given me courage and hope," and he folded her in his arms.

. . . . . .

Mr. Gulmore liked to spend his evenings with his wife and daughter. It amused him to hear what they had been doing during the day. Their gossip had its value; sentimental or spiteful, it threw quaint side-lights upon character. On the evening before the Faculty meeting Ida was bending over a book, while Mr. Gulmore smoked, and watched her. His daughter was somewhat of a puzzle to him still, and when occasion offered he studied her. "Where does she get her bitterness from? I'm not bitter, an' I had difficulties, was poor an' ignorant, had to succeed or go under, while she has had everythin' she wanted. It's a pity she ain't kinder. . . ."

Presently Mrs. Gulmore put away her work and left the room. Taking up the thread of a conversation that had been broken off by his wife's presence, Mr. Gulmore began:

"I don't say Roberts'll win, Ida. The bettin' 's the other way; but I'm not sure, for I don't know the crowd. He may come out on top, though I hev noticed that young men who run into their first fight and get badly whipped ain't likely to fight desperate the second time.—Grit's half trainin'!"

"I wish I could be there to *see* him beaten!" Ida had tried to turn her wounded pride into dislike, and was succeeding: "I hate to feel he's in the same town with us—the coward!"

At this moment Mrs. Gulmore re-entered the room.

"To think of it! Sal left the gas-stove flarin'. I made her get up and come downstairs to put it out. That'll learn her! Of all the careless, shiftless creatures, these coloured people are the worst. Come, Ida, it's long after nine, and I'm tired. You can read in your bedroom if you want to."

After the usual "good-night" and kisses, Ida went upstairs. While Mrs. Gulmore busied herself putting "things straight," Mr. Gulmore sat thinking:

"She takes after her mother in everythin', but she has more pride. It's that makes her bitter. She's jest like her—only prettier. The same peaky nose, pointed chin, little thin ears set close to her head, fine hair—the Yankee school-marm. First-rate managin' women; the best wives in the world to keep a house an' help a man on. But they hain't got sensuality enough to be properly affectionate."

ON the following afternoon Roberts stopped before the door of his house and looked back to-

wards the University. There on the crest of the hill stood the huge building of bluish-grey stone with the round tower of the observatory in the middle—like a mallet with a stubby handle in the air.

While gazing thus a shrill voice reached him, the eager treble of a newsboy:

"Great Scandal!" he heard—and then "Scandal in the University! Full Report! Only five cents! Five cents for the 'Herald's' Special!"

He hastened to the gate and beckoned to the little figure in the distance. His thoughts were whirling. What did it mean? Could the "Herald" have issued a special edition with the report of the meeting? Impossible! there wasn't time for that. Yet, he had walked leisurely with Krazinski, and newspapers did wonders sometimes. Wonders! 'twould be a breach of confidence. There was an honourable understanding that no one should divulge what took place in a Faculty meeting. "Honourable" and Gulmore—the two words wouldn't go together. Could it be?

A glance at the contents-bill brought a flush to his face. He gave a quarter for the sheet, and as the boy fumbled for change he said, taking hold of the bill:

"I want this too; you can keep the rest of the money," and hurried into the house.

May met him at the door of the sitting-room, but did not speak, while he opened out the paper, and in silence showed her the long report of the meeting.

"What do you think of that?" he asked, and without waiting for an answer he spread the contents-bill upon the table.

"This is better," he went on, bitterly. "Read this!" And she read:

RUCTIONS IN LEARNING'S HOME.

THE PRESIDENT'S FLANK ATTACK.

FOURS TO A PAIR.

THE PAGAN RETIRES AND THE POLE.

"Oh, the brutes! How could they?" May exclaimed. "But what does it mean?"

"You have it all there," he said, touching the bill; "all in two or three lines of cheerful insult, in our American fashion. In spite of the opinion of every leading lawyer in the State, sixteen—fanatics, to give them the benefit of the doubt, voted that a disbelief in Christian dogma was the same thing as 'open immorality.' The Father of Lies made such men!"

"Did no one vote for you?"

"Two, Krazinski and some one else, I think 'twas little Black, and two papers were blank. But fancy the President speaking against me, though he has a casting-vote. All he could say was that the parents were the only proper judges of what a student should be taught. That may be true; I may have been mistaken, wrong, if you like; but my fault was not 'open immorality,' as specified in the Statute. They lied against me, those sixteen."

May sympathized too keenly with his indignation to think of trying to allay it; she couldn't help asking, "What did you do after the voting?"

"What could I do? I had had enough of such opponents. I told them that if they dismissed me I'd take the case into the courts, where at the worst their reading of the words 'open immorality' would be put upon record, and my character freed from stain. But, if they chose to rescind their vote I said I was willing to resign."

"They accepted that?"

"Krazinski forced them to. He told them they dared not face the law courts for fear it should come out that the professorships were the rewards of sectarian bigotry. He went right through the list, and ended by resigning his position.

"Then Campbell got up and regretted his speech. It was uncalled-for and—you know the sort of thing. My colleagues, he said, would have preferred to retain my services if I had yielded to the opinion of the parents. Under the circumstances there was no course open but to accept my resignation. They would not enter the vote upon the minutes; they would even write me a letter expressing regret at losing me, etc. So the matter ended.

"Coming down the hill I tried to persuade Krazinski not to resign on my account. But the dear old fellow was obstinate; he had long intended to retire. He was very kind. He thinks I shall find another place easily.

"Now, May, you have heard the whole tale, what is your opinion? Are you disappointed with me? You might well be. I'm disappointed with myself. Somehow or other I've not got hate enough in me to be a good fighter."

"Disappointed? How little you know me! It's

my life now to be with you. Whatever you say or do is right to me. I think it's all for the best; I wouldn't have you stay here after what has passed."

May meant all she said, and more. At the bottom of her heart she was not sorry that he was going to leave Tecumseh. If she thereby lost the pleasure of appearing as his wife before the companions of her youth, on the other hand, he would belong to her more completely, now that he was cut off from all other sympathy and no longer likely to meet Miss Gulmore. Moreover, her determination to follow him in single-hearted devotion seemed to throw the limelight of romance upon her disagreement with her father, which had been much more acute than she had given Roberts to suppose. She had loved her father, and if he had appealed to her affection he could have so moved her that she would have shown Roberts a hesitation which, in his troubled and depressed condition, might have brought about a coldness between them, if not a rupture of their relations. But Hutchings, feeling that he was in the wrong, had contented himself with depreciating Roberts by sneer and innuendo, and so had aroused her generous partisanship. The proceedings of the Faculty naturally increased her sympathy with her lover, and her enthusiastic support did much to revive his confidence in himself. When they parted in the evening he had already begun to think of the preparations to be made for his journey Eastwards.

. . . . . .

A few weeks later a little knot of friends stood together one morning on the down-platform of the Tecumseh station, waiting for the train to come in. Professor Roberts was the centre of the group, and by his side stood dainty May Hutchings, the violet eyes intense with courage that held the sweet lips to a smile. Around them were some ten or a dozen students and Krazinski, all in the highest spirits. They were talking about Roberts' new appointment at Yale, which he attributed to Krazinski's influence. Presently they became aware of an unwonted stir at the entrance-door behind them. As they turned in wonder they saw that the negro hands had formed a lane through which, heralded by the obsequious station-master, Mr. Gulmore, with his daughter on his arm, was coming towards them. Heedless of their astonishment, the Boss walked on till he stood in front of Roberts.

"Professor, we've heard of your good fortune, and are come to congratulate you. Ida here always thought a pile of your knowledge an' teachin', an' I guess she was right. Our little difference needn't count now. You challenged me to a sort of wrastle an' you were thrown; but I bear no malice, an' I'm glad to offer you my hand an' to wish you—success."

Roberts shook hands without hesitation. He was simply surprised, and had no inkling of the reason which had led Gulmore to come to the station and to bring Ida. Had he been told that this was the father's plan for protecting his daughter against the possibility of indiscreet gossip he would have been still more astonished. "Nor do I bear malice," he rejoined, with a smile; "though the wrestling can

hardly be considered fair when twenty pull one man down."

"'Twas my crowd against yours," replied the Boss indifferently. "But I'm kinder sorry that you're leavin' the town. I'd never have left a place where I was beaten. No, sir; I'd have taken root right there an' waited. Influence comes with time, an' you had youth on your side."

"That may be your philosophy, Mr. Gulmore," said Roberts lightly, as the other paused, "but it's not mine. I'm satisfied with one or two falls; they've taught me that the majority is with you."

Gulmore's seriousness relaxed still further; he saw his opponent's ingenuousness, and took his statement as a tribute to his own power.

"My philosophy," he began, as if the word pleased him, "my philosophy—I guess I ken give you that in a few words. When I was a boy in Vermont I was reckoned smart at figgerin'. But one day an old farmer caught me. 'See here, boy,' he said, 'I live seventeen miles out of town, and when in late fall the roads are bad and I drive in with a cartload of potatoes, the shakin' sends all the big potatoes to the top and all the little ones to the bottom. That's good for me that wants to sell, but why is it? How does it come?'

"Well, I didn't know the reason then, an' I told him so. But I took the fact right there for my philosophy. Ef the road was long enough and rough enough I was sure to come to the top."

"I understand," said Roberts laughingly. "But I've heard farmers here say that the biggest potatoes are not the best; they are generally hollow at the ——in the middle, I mean."

"That's weak," retorted Gulmore with renewed seriousness. "I shouldn't hev thought you'd hev missed the point like that. When I was a boy I skipped away from the meanin' out of conceit. I thought I'd climb high because I was big, and meant gettin' up more'n a little un could. But before I was a man I understood the reason. It isn't that the big potatoes want partic'lar to come to the top; it is that the little potatoes are *de*termined to get to the bottom.

"You may now be havin' a boost up, Professor, I hope you are; but you've gone underneath once, an' that looks bad."

"The analogy seems perfect," replied Roberts thoughtfully, disregarding the personal sting. "But, by your own showing, the big men owe their position to the ordered tiers beneath them, and all rest upon the very smallest, who, helpless and bruised, support their fortunate brethren. A sad state of things at the best, Mr. Gulmore; but unbearable if the favoured ones forget their debt to those below them."

"Sad or not," said the Boss, "it represents the facts, an' it's well to take account of them; but I guess we must be goin', your time'll soon be up. We wish you success, Professor."

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